This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

HD WIDENER
HW KQP2 -

22442.14.2

Harvard College
Library

BOUGHT FROM THE FUND
BEQUEATHED BY

Evert Jansen Wendell

CLASS OF 1882

of New York

DEERBROOK.

A Novel.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

"With good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things; by things deemed weak
Subverting worldly strong and worldly wise."—MILTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
MDCCCXXXIX.

22442.14.2

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS,
WHITEFRIARS.

36 9 6
49.207
38.2

CONTENTS TO VOL. II.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	FIRST HOSPITALITY.	1
II.	GRANDMAMA IN RETREAT.	20
III.	HOME AT THE HOPES'.	36
IV.	ENDERBY NEWS.	67
V.	CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE UNCONSCIOUS.	82
VI.	THE MEADOWS IN WINTER.	103
VII.	MOODS OF THE MIND.	120
VIII.	WARNINGS.	135
IX.	LONG WALKS.	157
X.	DISCLOSURES.	169
XI.	A MORNING IN MARCH.	199
XII.	DEERBROOK COMMOTIONS.	220
XIII.	COMING TO AN UNDERSTANDING.	271
XIV.	CONDOLENCE.	281
XV.	KEEPING SUNDAYS.	302
XVI.	GOING TO REST.	319

DEERBROOK.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST HOSPITALITY.

The Greys needed only to be asked to come and dine before the rest of the world could have an opportunity of seeing the bride and bridegroom. They had previously settled among themselves that they should be invited, and the answer was given on the instant. The only doubt was how far down in the family the pleasure ought to extend. Sydney was full of anxiety about it. His mother decided that he ought to be asked, but that perhaps he had better not go, as he would be in the way; and Sophia was sure it would be very dull for him; a sentence which made Sydney rather sulky. But Hester insisted on having him, and pleaded that William Levitt would come and meet him; and if the lads should find the drawing-room dull, there was the surgery, with some very curious things in it, where they might be

able to amuse themselves. So Sydney was to take up his lot with the elderly ones, and the little girls were to be somewhat differently entertained another day.

O! the anxieties of a young wife's first dinner-party! If remembered, they become laughable enough when looked back upon from future years; but they are no laughing matter at the time. The terror lest there should be too little on the table, and the consequent danger of there being too much: the fear at once of worrying the cook with too many directions, and leaving any necessary thing unsaid: the trembling doubt of any power of entertainment that may exist in the house; the anticipation of a yawn on the part of any guest, or of such a silence as may make the creaking of the foot-boy's shoes heard at dinner, or the striking of the hall clock in the evening,—these are the apprehensions which make the young wife wish herself on the other side of her first dinner-party, and render alluring the prospect of sitting down next day to hash or cold fowl, followed by odd custards and tartlets, with a stray mince-pie. Where a guest so experienced and so vigilant as Mrs. Grey is expected, the anxiety is redoubled, and the servants are sure to discover it by some means or other. Morris woke, this Saturday morning, with the feeling that something great was to happen that day; and Sally began to be sharp with the

footboy as early as ten o'clock. Hester and Margaret were surprised to find how soon there was nothing more left for them to do. The wine was decanted, the dessert dished up in the little store-room, and even the cake cut for tea, soon enough to leave almost the whole morning to be spent as usual. Margaret sat down to study German, and Hester to read. She had just observed that they could not expect to see Edward for some hours, as he had been sent for to the alms-houses, and meant to pay a country visit which would cost him a circuit on his return. These almshouses were six miles off; and when Mr. Hope was sent for by one of the inmates, nearly all the rest were wont to discover that they ailed more or less; so that their medical guardian found it no easy matter to get away, and his horse had learned, by practice, to stand longer there than anywhere else without fidgetting. Knowing this, Margaret fully agreed to her sister's proposition, that it must be some hours before Edward could appear. In a little while, however Hester threw down her book, and took up her work, laying her watch just under her eyes upon the table.

"Do you mean to do that for life, when your husband takes a country ride?" said Margaret, laughing.

"I hate these everlasting country rides!" cried

Hester. "I do wish he would give up those alms-houses."

"Give them up!"

"Yes: they are nothing but trouble and anxiety. The old folks are never satisfied, and never would be, if he lived among them, and attended to nobody else. And as often as he goes there, he is sure to be more wanted here than at any other time. There is another knock! There have been two people wanting him within this hour; and a country gentleman has left word that he shall call with his daughter at one o'clock."

"Well, let them come. If he is home, well and good; if not, they must wait till he arrives."

Hester started up, and walked about the room.

"I know what is in your mind," said Margaret. "The truth is, you are afraid of another accident. I do not wonder at it; but, dearest Hester, you must control this fear. Consider; supposing it to be Heaven's pleasure that you and he should live forty or fifty years together, what a world of anxiety you will inflict on yourself if you are to suffer in this way every time he rides six miles out and back again!"

"Perhaps I shall grow used to it: but I do wish he would give up those alms-houses."

"Suppose we ask him to give up practice at once," said Margaret, "that we may have him always with us. No, no, Hester; we must con-

sider him first, and ourselves next, and let him have his profession all to himself, and as much of it as he likes."

"Ourselves!" cried Hester, contemptuously.

"Well, yourself, then," said Margaret, smiling. "I only put myself in that I might lecture myself at the same time with you."

"Lecture away, dear," said Hester, "till you make me as reasonable as if I had no husband to care for."

Margaret might have asked whether Hester had been reasonable, when she had had neither husband nor lover to care for; but, instead of this, she opened the piano, and tempted her sister away from her watch to practise a duet.

"I will tell you what I am thinking of," cried Hester, breaking off in the middle of a bar of the second page. "Perhaps you thought me hasty just now; but you do not know what I had in my head. You remember how late Edward was called out, the night before last?"

"To Mrs. Marsh's child? Yes, it was quite dark when he went."

"There was no moon. Mr. Marsh wanted to send a servant back with him as far as the high-road; but he was sure he knew the way. He was riding very fast, when his horse suddenly stopped, and almost threw him over its head. He spurred in vain; the animal only turned round and

round, till a voice called from somewhere near; 'Stop there, for God's sake! Wait till I bring a light.' A man soon came with a lantern, and where do you think Edward found himself? On the brink of a mill-dam! Another step in the dark night, and he might have been heard of no more!"

Margaret was not at all surprised that Hester covered her face with her hands, at the end of this very disagreeable anecdote. "It is clear," said she, "that Edward is the person who wants lecturing. We must bid him not ride very fast on dark nights, on roads that he does not know. But I have a high opinion of this horse of his. One of the two is prudent; and that is a great comfort. And, for the present, there is the consolation that there are no mill-dams in the way to the almshouses, and that it is broad daylight. So let us go on with our duet,—or shall we begin again?"

Hester played through the duet, and then sighed over a new apprehension,—that some of these old invalids would certainly be taking Mr. Hope away from home on the two mornings when their neighbours were to pay the wedding visit. "And what shall we do then?" she inquired.

"We shall see when the time comes," replied Margaret. "Meanwhile we are sure of one good thing,—that Edward will not be called away from the dinner-table to-day by the alms-house people.

Come! let us play this over once more, that it may be ready for Mr. Grey in the evening."

Sooner than he was looked for,—sooner than it was supposed possible that he could have come,—Edward appeared.

"Safe?" cried he, laughing: "what should prevent my being safe? What sort of a soldier's or sailor's wife would you have made?" he asked, looking in Hester's happy face.

"She would be crazed with every gale, and die at 'rumours of wars,'" said Margaret; "mill-dams are horror enough for her—and, to say the truth, brother, for other people too, while you ride as you do."

"That was an accident which cannot recur," observed Hope. "I am sorry Mr. Marsh's man mentioned it. But Hester,———"

"I see what you would say," sighed Hester; "your mention of soldiers' and sailors' wives reminds me. I have no faith, I know; and I thought I should when———. O, I wonder how those old crusaders' wives endured their lives! But, perhaps, seven years' suspense was easier to bear than seven hours'."

Hester joined in the laugh at this speech, and Edward went to see his patients in a place where there was really no danger—in the waiting-room. Yet Hester was a little ruffled when the Greys appeared. So many messages had arrived for

Edward, that the country gentleman and his daughter had been kept waiting, and a livery servant had called twice, as if impatient. She was afraid that people would blame Edward—that he would never manage to satisfy them all. Her colour was raised, and her brow slightly bent, when her guests entered; but all was right when Edward followed, looking perfectly at leisure, and stood talking before the fire, as if he had been a man of no profession.

Mr. Hope had caused his feelings to be so well understood on one important subject, that it was necessary to respect them; and no mention of the Rowlands was made, either before dinner or in the presence of the servants. Nor was there any need of the topic. There was abundance to be said, without having recourse to doubtful subjects; and Margaret became so far relieved from all apprehension on this account, by the time the cheese appeared, that she assured herself that the day was passing off extremely well. There had not been a single pause left to be filled up with the clatter of knives and forks. Mrs. Grey pronounced the room delightfully warm; Sophia protested that she liked having the fire at her back; and Mr. Grey inquired where Hope got his ale. The boys, who had looked for the first half-hour as if they could not speak for the stiffness of their collars, were now in a full career of jokes, to judge by

their stifled laughter. Hester blushed beautifully at every little circumstance that occurred, and played the hostess very gracefully. The day was going off extremely well.

The approaching county election was the principal topic at dinner, as it was probably at every dinner-table in Deerbrook. Mrs. Grey first told Hope, at the bottom of the table, all about her wonder at seeing seven or eight gentlemen on horseback entering their field. She was exceedingly surprised to observe such a troop approaching the door; and she hardly knew what to make of it when the servant came in to say that the gentlemen wished to see her, as Mr. Grey was at a distance—at market that day. It was strange that she should so entirely forget that there was to be an election soon. To be sure, it might have occurred to her that the party came to canvass Mr. Grey: but she did not happen to remember at first; and she thought the gentleman who was spokesman excessively complimentary, both about the place and about some other things, till he mentioned his name, and that he was candidate for the county. Such a highly complimentary strain was not to her taste, she acknowledged; and it lost all its value when it was made so common as in this instance. This gentleman had kissed the little Rowlands all round, she had since been assured:—not that she wished to enlarge on that

subject; but it only showed what gentlemen will do when they are canvassing. The other candidate, Mr. Lowry, seemed a very high personage indeed. When he found Mr. Grey was not at home, he and all his party rode straight on, without inquiring for the ladies. Every one seemed to think that Mr. Lowry was not likely to carry his election, his manners were so extremely high.

Meanwhile, Mr. Grey was observing to his hostess that he was sorry to find there was an election impending. People in a small place like Deerbrook were quite apt enough to quarrel, day by day;—an election threw the place into an uproar.

"'How delightful!' those boys are thinking," said Hester, laughing.

"I am sure," said Sophia, "it is anything but delightful to me. I remember, last time, Sydney brought some squibs into the garden, and let them off while mama and I were in the shrubbery; and we could none of us get to sleep till after midnight for the light of the bonfire down the street."

"They should manage those things more quietly," observed Mr. Grey. "This time, however, there will be only a little effusion of joy, and then an end; for they say Ballinger will carry every vote in the place."

"Why, father!" cried Sydney, "are you going to vote for Ballinger this time?"

"No, my boy. I did not say so. I shall not vote at all," he added, observing that he was expected to explain himself. No remark being made, he continued—"It will not be convenient to me to meddle in election matters this time; and it would be of no use, as Lowry has not the slightest chance. One gets nothing but ill-will and trouble by meddling. So, my dear," turning to Hester, "your husband and I will just keep quiet, and let Deerbrook have its own way."

"I believe you may speak for yourself," replied Hester, her eyes sparkling. "Edward has no idea . . ." Then, remembering that she was speaking to a guest, she cut short her assurance that Edward had no idea of neglecting his duty when it was wanted most, for such a reason as that it was then most irksome.

"There is no occasion in the world for your husband to come forward," observed Mr. Grey, with kind anxiety. "I was saying, Hope, that you are quite absolved from interfering in politics. Nobody expects it from a medical man. Every one knows the disadvantage to a professional man, circumstanced like you, of taking any side in a party matter. You might find the consequences very serious, I assure you."

"And nobody expects it of a medical man," echoed Mrs. Grey.

Mr Hope did not reply that he voted for other

reasons than that it was expected of him. He had argued the subject with Mr. Grey before, and knew that they must agree to differ. He quietly declared his intention of voting for Mr. Lowry, and then asked Sophia to take wine. His manner left no resource to Mrs. Grey but to express her feelings to his wife in the drawing-room, after dinner.

She there drew Hester's arm within her own, and kindly observed what pleasure it gave her to see her anticipations so fulfilled. She had had this home, fitted up and inhabited as it now was, in her mind's eye for a longer time than she should choose to tell. Elderly folks might be allowed to look forward, and Mr. Grey could bear witness that she had done so. It was delightful to look round and see how all had come to pass.

"Everybody is so interested!" observed Sophia. "Mrs. Howell says, some have observed to her what a pity it is that you are dissenters, so that you will not be at church on Sunday. Everybody would be sure to be there; and she says she is of opinion that, considering how many friends wish to see you make your first appearance, you ought to go, for once. She cannot imagine what harm it could do you to go for once. But, whatever you may think about that, it shows her interest, and I thought you would like to know it. Have you seen Mrs. Howell's window?"

"My dear! how should they?" exclaimed her mother.

"I forgot they could not go out before Sunday. But, Margaret, you must look at Mrs. Howell's window the first thing when you can get out. It is so festooned with purple and white, that I told Miss Miskin I thought they would be obliged to light up in the day-time, they have made the shop so dark."

"And they have thrust all the green and orange into the little side window, where nobody can see it!" cried Sydney.

"You managed to see it, I perceive," said Hester; Sydney having at the moment mounted a cockade, and drawn out his green and orange watch-ribbon into the fullest view. William Levitt lost no time in going through the same process with his purple and white.

"You will be the ornaments of Deerbrook," said Margaret, "if you walk about in that gay style. I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you both in the street, that I may judge of the effect."

"They will have lost their finery by that time," said Sophia. "We had a terrible snatching of cockades last time."

"Snatching! let them try to snatch mine, and see what they'll get by it!" cried Sydney.

"What would they get but the ribbons?" asked Margaret.

Sydney drew her to the light, opened the bows of his cockade, and displayed a corking-pin stuck upright under each bow.

"Isn't is horrid?" said Sophia.

"Horrid! It is not half so horrid as fish-hooks."

And Sydney related how fish-hooks had actually been used during the last election, to detain with their barbs the fingers of snatchers of cockades. "Which do you use?" he asked of William Levitt.

"Neither. My father won't let me do anything more than just wear a cockade and watch-ribbon. I have got a watch-guard too, you see, for fear of losing my watch. But you won't get my cockade off a bit the sooner for my having no spikes under it. I have a particular way of fastening it on. Only try, any day. I defy you to it."

"Hush, hush, boys! don't talk of defiance," said Mrs. Grey. "I am sure, I wish there were no such things as elections; in country places, at least. They make nothing but mischief. And, indeed, Hester, my dear, it is a great pity that those should meddle who can keep out of them, as your husband fairly may. Whichever way he might vote, a great many disagreeable remarks would be made; and if he votes, as he says, for Mr. Lowry, I really think, and so does Mr. Grey, that it will be a serious injury to him in his profession."

Hester replied, with some gravity, that people

could never do their whole duty without causing disagreeable remarks; and seldom without suffering serious injury.

"But why should he vote?" persisted Mrs. Grey.

"Because he considers it his duty,—which is commonly his reason for whatever he does."

"An excellent reason too: but I rather thought —I always fancied he defended acting from impulse. But I beg your pardon, my dear;" and she nodded and winked towards the young people, who were trying the impression of a new seal at the centre table, heeding nothing about either duty or impulse. Margaret had fixed the attention of the boys upon this curious seal of hers, in order to obviate a snatching of cockades, or other political feud, upon the spot.

"It seems as if I could speak about nothing but your husband, my dear," continued Mrs. Grey, in a whisper: "but you know I feel towards him as towards a son, as I have told him. Do you think he has quite, entirely, got over his accident?"

"Entirely, he thinks. He calls himself in perfect health."

"Well, he ought to know best; but ——"

"But what?" asked Hester, anxiously.

"It has occurred to us, that he may still want watching and care. It has struck both Mr. Grey and me, that he is not quite the same that he

was before that accident. It is natural enough. And yet I thought in the autumn that he was entirely himself again: but there is still a little difference—a little flatness of spirits sometimes—a little more gravity than used to be natural to him."

"But you do not think he looks ill? Tell me just what you think."

"O, no, not ill; rather delicate, perhaps; but I am sure it is wonderful that he is so well, after such an accident. He calls himself perfectly well, does he?"

"Perfectly."

"O, then we may be quite easy; for he must know best. Do not let anything that I have said dwell upon your mind, my dear. I only just thought I would ask."

How common it is for one's friends to drop a heavy weight upon one's heart, and then desire one not to let it dwell there! Hester's spirits were irrecoverably damped for this evening. Her husband seen to be an altered man, flat in spirits, and looking delicate, and she told not to be uneasy! She was most eager for the entrance of the gentlemen from the dining-room, that she might watch him: and, till they came, she had not a word of amusement to furnish to her guests. Margaret perceived that something had gone wrong, and talked industriously till reinforced from the dining-room.

Sophia whispered a hint to her mother to inquire particularly about Mrs. Enderby's health. At the mention of her name, Mr. Hope took his seat on the sofa beside Mrs. Grey, and replied gravely and fully,—that he thought Mrs. Enderby really very unwell,—more so than he had ever known her. She was occasionally in a state of great suffering, and any attention that her old friends could show her in the way of a quiet call would be a true kindness.—Had he alarmed her family?—There was quite hint enough for alarm, he said, in the state in which her relations saw her at times.—But Mrs. Rowland was always trying to make out that nothing was the matter with her mother: was it not so?—Not exactly so. Mrs. Rowland knew that there was no immediate danger—that her mother might live many months, or even a few years; but Mr. Hope believed neither Mrs. Rowland, nor any one else, could deny her sufferings.

"They say Mr. Philip is coming," observed Mr. Grey.

"O, I hope he is!" cried Sydney, turning round to listen.

"Some people say that he is otherwise occupied," observed Sophia. "If all accounts be true . . ." She caught her mother's eye, and stopped suddenly and awkwardly.

Mr. Hope involuntarily glanced at Margaret, as one or two others were doing at the same time.

Nothing was to be discerned, for she was stooping over the volume of engravings that she was showing to William Levitt; and she remained stooping for a long while.

When the proper amount of playing and singing had been gone through, and Mrs. Grey's sedan was announced, the cloaked and muffled guests left behind a not very happy party. Margaret's gaiety seemed exhausted, and she asked if it was not late. Hester was gazing at her husband. She saw the perspiration on his brow. She put her arm within his, and anxiously inquired whether he was not unwell. She was sure he had never fully recovered his strength: she had not taken care enough of him: why did he not tell her when he was weary and wanted nursing?

Mr. Hope looked at her with an unaffected surprise which went far to console her, and assured her that he was perfectly well; and that, moreover, he was so fond of indulgence that she would be sure to hear of it, if ever he could find a pretence for getting upon the sofa.

Hester was comforted, but said that his spirits were not always what they had been; and she appealed to Margaret. Margaret declared that any failure of spirits in Edward was such a new idea, that she must consider before she gave an answer. She thought that he had been too busy to draw so many caricatures as usual lately; but

she had observed no deeper signs of despondency than that.

"Do not let us get into the habit of talking about spirits," said Hope. "I hear quite enough about that away from home; and I can assure you, professionally, that it is a bad subject to dwell upon. Every one who lives has variations of spirits: they are like the sunshine, or like Dr. Levitt's last sermon, of which Mrs. Enderby says every Sunday in the church-porch,—'It is to be felt, not talked about.'"

"But, as a sign of health ——" said Hester.

"As a sign of health, my dear, the spirits of all this household may be left to my professional discrimination. Will you trust me, my dear?"

"O, yes," she uttered, with a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER II.

GRANDMAMA IN RETREAT.

"I AM better now, Phœbe," said Mrs. Enderby, sinking back faintly in her easy-chair, after one of her attacks of spasms. "I am better now; and if you will fan me for a minute or two, I shall be quite fit to see the children,—quite delighted to have them."

"I declare," said the maid, "here are the drops standing upon your face this cold day, as if it was August! But if the pain is gone, never mind anything else! And I, for one, won't say anything against your having the children in; for I'm sure the seeing your friends has done you no harm, and nothing but good."

"Pray draw up the blind, Phœbe; and let me see something of the sunshine. Bless me! how frosty the field looks, while I have been stifled with heat for this hour past! I had better not go to the window, however, for I begin to feel almost chilly already. Thank you, Phœbe; you have fanned me enough. Now call the children, Phœbe."

Phœbe wrapped a cloak about her mistress's knees, pinned her shawl up closer around her throat, and went to call the children in from the parlour below. Matilda drew up her head and flattened her back, and then asked her grandmama how she did. George looked up anxiously in the old lady's face.

"Ah, George," said she, smiling; "it is an odd face to look at, is not it? How would you like your face to look as mine does?"

"Not at all," said George.

Mrs. Enderby laughed heartily, and then told him that her face was not unlike his once,—as round, and as red, and as shining in frosty weather.

"Perhaps if you were to go out now into the frost, your face would look as it used to do."

"I am afraid not. When my face looked like yours, it was when I was a little girl, and used to slide and make snow-balls as you do. That was a long time ago. My face is wrinkled now, because I am old; and it is pale, because I am ill."

George heard nothing after the word "snow-balls." "I wish some more snow would come," he observed. "We have plenty of ice down in the meadows, but there has been only one fall of snow; and that melted almost directly."

"Papa thinks there will be more snow very soon," observed Matilda.

"If there is, you children can do something for me that I should like very much," said grandmama. "Shall I tell you what it is?"

"Yes."

"You can make a snow-man in that field. I am sure Mr. Grey will give you leave."

"What good will that do you?" asked Matilda.

"I can sit here and watch you; and I shall like that exceedingly. I shall see you gathering the snow, and building up your man: and if you will turn about and shake your hand this way now and then, I shall be sure to observe it, and I shall think you are saying something kind to me."

"I wish the snow would come," cried George, stamping with impatience.

"I do not believe mama will let us," observed Matilda. "She prohibits our going into Mr. Grey's field."

"But she shall let us, that one time," cried George. "I will ask papa, and Mr. Grey, and Sydney, and uncle Philip and all. When will uncle Philip come again?"

"Some time soon, I dare say. But, George, we must do as your mama pleases about my plan, you know. If she does not wish you to go into Mr. Grey's field, you can make your snow-man somewhere else."

"But then you won't see us.—But I know what I will do. I will speak to Sydney, and he and

Fanny and Mary shall make you a snow-man yonder, where we should have made him."

Mrs. Enderby pressed the boy to her, and laughed while she thanked him, but said it was not the same thing seeing the Greys make a snow-man.

"Why, George!" said Matilda, contemptuously.

"When *will* uncle Philip come?" asked the boy, who was of opinion that uncle Philip could bring all things to pass.

"Why, I will tell you how it is, my dear. Uncle Philip is very busy learning his lessons."

The boy stared.

"Yes: grown-up people who mean to be great lawyers, as I believe uncle Philip does, have to learn lessons like little boys, only much longer and much harder."

"When will he have done them?"

"Not for a long while yet: but he will make a holiday some time soon, and come to see us. I should like to get well before that. Sometimes I think I shall, and sometimes I think not."

"Does he expect you will?"

"He expects nothing about it. He does not know that I am ill. I do not wish that he should know it, my dears; so, when I feel particularly well, and when I have heard anything that pleases me, I ask Phœbe to bring me the pen and ink, and I write to uncle Philip."

"And why does not mama tell him how you are?"

"Ah! why, indeed?" muttered Phœbe.

"She knows that I do not wish it. Uncle Philip writes charming long letters to me, as I will show you. Bring me my reticule. Here,—here is a large sheet of paper, quite full, you see—under the seal and all. When will you write such long letters, I wonder?"

"I shall when I am married, I suppose," said Matilda, again drawing up her little head.

"You married, my love! And pray when are you to be married?"

"Mama often talks of the time when she shall lose me, and of what things have to be done while she has me with her."

"There is a great deal to be done indeed, love, before that day, if it ever comes."

"There are more ways than one of losing a child," observed Phœbe, in her straight-forward way. "If Mrs. Rowland thinks so long beforehand of the one way, it is to be hoped she keeps Miss Matilda up to the thought of the other, which must happen sooner or later, while marrying may not."

"Well, Phœbe," said the old lady, "we will not put any dismal thoughts into this little head: time enough for that: we will leave all that to Miss Young." Then, stroking Matilda's round cheek, she inquired, "My love, did you ever in your life feel any pain?"

"O dear, yes, grandmama: to be sure I have; twice. Why, don't you remember, last Spring, I had a dreadful pain in my head for nearly two hours, on George's birth-day? And last week, after I went to bed, I had such a pain in my arm, I did not know how to bear it."

"And what became of it?"

"O, I found at last I could bear it no longer, and I began to think what I should do. I meant to ring the bell, but I fell asleep."

Phœbe laughed with very little ceremony, and grandmama could not help joining. She supposed Matilda hoped it might be long enough before she had any more pain. In the night-time, certainly, Matilda said. And not in the day-time? Is not pain as bad in the day-time? Matilda acknowledged that she should like to be ill in the day-time. Mama took her on her lap when she was ill; and Miss Young was so very sorry for her; and she had something nice to drink.

"Then I am afraid, my dear, you don't pity me at all," said grandmama. "Perhaps you think you would like to live in a room like this, with a sofa and a screen, and Phœbe to wait upon you, and whatever you might fancy to eat and drink. Would you like to be ill, as I am?"

"Not at present," said Matilda: "not till I am married. I shall enjoy doing as I like when I am married."

"How the child's head runs upon being married!" said Phœbe. "And to suppose that being ill is doing as one likes, of all odd things!"

"I should often like to fly all over the world," said Mrs. Enderby, "and to get anywhere out of this room,—I am so tired of it: but I know I cannot: so I get books, and read about all the strange places, far off, that Mungo Park tells us about, and Gulliver, and Captain Parry. And I should often like to sleep at night when I cannot; and then I get up softly, without waking Phœbe, and look out at the bright stars, and think over all we are told about them,—about their being all full of men and women. Did you know that, George?" asked she,—George being now at the window.

"O, yes," answered Matilda for him, "we know all about those things."

"Are falling stars all full of men and women?" asked George.

"There were none on a star that my father saw fall on the Dingleford road," observed Phœbe. "It wasn't big enough to hold men and women."

"Did it fall in the middle of the road?" asked George, turning from the window. "What was it like?"

"It was a round thing, as big as a house, and all bright and crystal-like," said Phœbe, with absolute confidence. "It blocked up the road

from the great oak that you may remember, close by the second mile-stone, to the ditch on the opposite side."

"Phœbe, are you sure of that?" asked Mrs. Enderby, with a face full of anxious doubt.

"Ma'am, my father came straight home after seeing it fall; and he let my brother John and me go the next morning early, to bring home some of the splinters."

"O, well," said Mrs. Enderby, who always preferred believing to doubting. "I have heard of stones falling from the moon."

"This was a falling star, ma'am."

"Can you show me any of the splinters?" asked George, eagerly.

"There was nothing whatsoever left of them," said Phœbe, "by the time John and I went. We could not find a piece of crystal so big as my thimble. My father has often laughed at John and me since, for not having been there in time, before it was all gone."

"It is a good thing, my dears, depend upon it, as I was saying," observed Mrs. Enderby, "to know all such things about the stars, and so on, against the time when you cannot do as you like, and go where you please. Matilda, my jewel, when you are married, as you were talking about, and can please yourself, you will take great care to be kind to your mama, my dear, if poor mama should

be old and ill. You will always wish to be tender to your mother, love, I am sure; and that will do her more good than anything."

"Perhaps mama won't be ill," replied Matilda.

"Then if she is never ill, she will certainly be old, some day; and then you will be as kind to her as ever you can be,—promise me, my love. Your mama loves you dearly, Matilda."

"She says I dance better than any girl in Miss Anderson's school, grandmama. I heard her tell Mrs. Levitt so yesterday."

"Here comes mama!" said George, from the window.

"Your mama, my dear? Phœbe, sweep up the hearth. Hang that curtain straight. Give me that letter,—no, not that,—the large letter. There! now put it into my knitting-basket. Make haste down, Phœbe, to be ready to open the door for Mrs. Rowland. Don't keep her waiting a moment on the steps."

"She has not got to the steps yet," said George. "She is talking to Mrs. Grey. Mrs. Grey was coming here, and mama went and spoke to her. O, Matilda, come and look how they are nodding their bonnets at each other! I think Mrs. Grey is very angry, she wags her head about so. There! now she is going away. There she goes across the road! and mama is coming up the steps."

After a minute or two of silent expectation,

Mrs. Rowland entered her mother's room. She brought with her a draught of wintry air, which, as she jerked aside her ample silk cloak, on taking her seat on the sofa, seemed to chill the invalid, though there was now a patch of colour on each withered cheek.

"How much better you look, ma'am!" was the daughter's greeting. "I always thought it would be a pity to disturb Philip about you; and now, if he were to see you, he would not believe that you had been ill. Mr. Rowland would be satisfied that I am right, I am sure, if he were to come in."

"My mistress is noways better," said Phœbe, bluntly. "She is not the better for that flush she has got now, but the worse."

"Never mind, Phœbe! I shall do very well, I dare say," said Mrs. Enderby, with a sigh. "Well, my dear, how do you all go on at home?"

"Much as usual, ma'am. But that reminds me—Matilda, my own love, Miss Young must be wanting you for your lesson on objects. Go, my dear."

"I hoped Matilda was come for the day," said Mrs. Enderby. "I quite expected she was to stay with me to-day. Do let me have her, my dear; it will do me so much good."

"You are very kind, ma'am, but it is quite impossible. It is totally out of the question, I assure you. Matilda, my love, go this instant. We

make a great point of the lessons on objects. Pray, Phœbe, tie Miss Rowland's bonnet, and make haste."

Phœbe did so, taking leave to observe that little girls were likely to live long enough to know plenty of things after they had no grandmamas left to be a comfort to.

Mrs. Enderby struggled to say "Hush, Phœbe;" but she found she could not speak. George was desired to go with his sister, and was scarcely allowed time to kiss his grandmama. While Phœbe was taking the children down stairs, Mrs. Rowland wondered that some people allowed their servants to take such liberties as were taken; and gave notice that, though she tolerated Phœbe, because Phœbe's mistress had taken a fancy to her, she could not allow her family plans to be made a subject of remark to her mother's domestics. Mrs. Enderby had not quite decided upon her line of reply, when Phœbe came back, and occupied herself in supplying her mistress, first with a freshly heated footstool, and then with a cup of arrow-root.

"Where do you get your arrow-root, ma'am?" asked Mrs. Rowland. "I want some extremely for my poor dear Anna; and I can procure none that is at all to compare with yours."

"Mrs. Grey was so kind as to send me some, my dear; and it really is excellent. Phœbe, how much of it is there left? I dare say there may be enough for a cup or two for dear little Anna."

Phœbe replied, that there was very little left—not any more than her mistress would require before she could grow stronger. Mrs. Rowland would not take the rest of the arrow-root on any account: she was only wondering where Mrs. Grey got it, and how it was that the Greys always contrived to help themselves with the best of everything. Phœbe was going to observe that they helped their neighbours to good things as well as themselves; but a look from her mistress stopped her. Mrs. Enderby remarked that she had no doubt she could learn from Mrs. Grey, or Sophia, the next time she saw either of them, where they procured their arrow-root. "It is a long time since I saw Mrs. Grey," she observed, timidly.

"My dear ma'am, how can you think of seeing any one, in your present state?" inquired the daughter. "One need but see the flush in your face, to know that it would be highly improper for you to admit company. I could not take the responsibility of allowing it."

"But Mrs. Grey is not company, my love."

"Any one is company to an invalid. I assure you I prevented Mr. Rowland's coming, for the reason I assign. He was coming yesterday, but I would not let him."

"I should like to see him, however. And I should like to see Mrs. Grey too."

Under pretence of arranging her mistress's

shawl, Phœbe touched the old lady's shoulder, in token of intelligence. Mrs. Enderby was somewhat flurried at the liberty which she felt her maid had taken with her daughter; but she could not notice it now; and she introduced another subject. Had everybody done calling on the Hopes? Were the wedding visits all over? O yes, Mrs. Rowland was thankful to say; that fuss was at an end at last. One would think nobody had ever been married before, by the noise that had been made in Deerbrook about this young couple.

"Mr. Hope is such a favourite!" observed Mrs. Enderby.

"He has been so; but it won't last. I never saw a young man so gone off as he is. He has not been like the same man since he connected himself with the Greys so decidedly. Surely, ma'am, you must perceive that."

"It had not occurred to me, my dear. He comes very often, and he is always extremely kind and very entertaining. He brought his bride with him yesterday, which I thought very attentive, as I could not go and pay my respects to her. And really, Priscilla, whether it was that I had not seen her for some time, or that pretty young ladies look prettiest in an old woman's sick-room, I thought she was more beautiful than ever."

"She *is* handsome," admitted Mrs. Rowland. "Poor thing! it makes one sorry for her, when one thinks what is before her."

"What is before her?" asked Mrs. Enderby, alarmed.

"If she loves her husband at all, she must suffer cruelly in seeing him act as he persists in doing; and she must tremble in looking forward to the consequences. He is quite obstinate about voting for Mr. Lowry, though there is not a soul in Deerbrook to keep him in countenance; and everybody knows how strongly Sir William Hunter has expressed himself in favour of Mr. Ballinger. It is thought the consequences will be very serious to Mr. Hope. There is his alms-house practice at stake, at all events; and I fancy a good many families will have no more to do with him if he defies the Hunters, and goes against the opinions of all his neighbours. His wife must see that he has nobody with him. I do pity the poor young thing!"

"Dear me!" said the old lady, "can nothing be done, I wonder. I declare I am quite concerned. I should hope something may be done. I would take the liberty of speaking to him myself, rather than that any harm should happen to him. He has always been so very kind to me, that I think I could venture to say anything to him. I will turn it over in my mind, and see what can be done."

"You will not prevail with him, ma'am, I am afraid. If Mr. Grey speaks in vain (as I know

he has done), it is not likely that any one else will have any influence over him. No, no; the wilful must be left to their own devices. Whatever you do, ma'am, do not speak to the bride about it, or there is no knowing what you may bring upon yourself."

"What could I bring upon myself, my dear?"

"O, those who do not see the vixen in that pretty face of hers, have not such good eyes as she has herself. For God's sake, ma'am, do not offend her!"

Mrs. Enderby was now full of concern; and, being as unhappy as she could be made for the present, her daughter took her leave. The old lady looked into the fire and sighed, for some minutes after she was left alone. When Phœbe re-entered, her mistress declared that she felt quite tired out, and must lie down. Before she closed her eyes, she raised her head again, and said—

"Phœbe, I am surprised at you—."

"O, ma'am, you mean about my taking the liberty to make a sign to you. But, ma'am, I trust you will excuse it, because I am sure Mr. Hope would have no objection to your seeing Mrs. Grey; and, to my thought, there is no occasion to consult with anybody else; and I have no doubt Mrs. Grey will be calling again some day soon, just at a time when you are fit to see her. Is not there any book, or anything, ma'am, that I could

be carrying over to Mrs. Grey's while you are resting yourself, ma'am?"

"Ah! do so, Phœbe. Carry that book,—it is not quite due, but that does not signify; carry that book over, and give my regards, and beg to know how Mrs. Grey and all the family are. And if Mrs. Grey *should* come in this evening," she continued, in excuse to herself for her devices, "I shall be able to find out, in a quiet way, where she gets her arrow-root; and Priscilla will be glad to know."

Whatever it might be that Phœbe said to Alice, and that brought Mrs. Grey out into the hall, to speak herself to Phœbe, the result was, that Mrs. Grey's lantern was ordered as soon as it grew dark, and that she arrived in Mrs. Enderby's apartment just as the old lady had waked from her doze, and while the few tears that had escaped from under her eyelids before she slept were yet scarcely dried upon her cheeks.

CHAPTER III.

HOME AT THE HOPES'.

The evil consequences of Mr. Hope's voting for Lowry had not been exaggerated in the anticipations of his friends and vigilant neighbours; and these consequences were rather aggravated than alleviated by the circumstance that Mr. Lowry won the election. First, the inhabitants of Deerbrook were on the watch for any words which might fall from Sir William or Lady Hunter; and when it was reported that Sir William had frowned, and sworn an oath at Mr. Hope, on hearing how he had voted, and that Lady Hunter had asked whether it was possible that Mr. Hope had forgotten under whose interest he held his appointment to attend the alms-houses and the neighbouring hamlet, several persons determined to be beforehand with their great neighbours, and to give the benefit of their family practice to some one of better politics than Mr. Hope. In another set of minds, a real fear of Mr. Hope, as a dangerous person, sprang up under the heat of the displeasure

of the influential members of society. Such were slow to have recourse to another medical attendant, and undertook the management of the health of their own families till they could find an adviser in whom they could perfectly confide. When Mr. Lowry gained the contest, the population of Deerbrook was electrified, and the unpleasantness of their surprise was visited upon the only supporter of Mr. Lowry whom the place contained. Wise folks were not wanting who talked of the skill which some persons had in keeping on the winning side,—of reasons which time sometimes revealed for persons choosing to be singular,—and some remarkable incidents were reported of conversations between Mr. Lowry and Mr. Hope in the lanes, and of certain wonderful advantages which had lately fallen to one or another of Mr. Hope's acquaintances, through some strong political interest. Mr. Rowland doubted, at his own table, all the news he heard on the subject, and said everywhere that he did not see why a man should not vote as he pleased. Mr. Grey was very sorry about the whole affair; he was sorry that there had been any contest at all for the county, as it disturbed the peace of Deerbrook; he was sorry that the candidate he preferred had won, as the fact exasperated the temper of Deerbrook; he was sorry that Hope had voted, to the detriment of his name and rising fortunes; and he was sorry

that he himself had been unable at last to vote for Lowry, to keep his young friend in countenance: it was truly unlucky that he should have passed his promise early to Sir William Hunter not to vote. It was a sad business altogether. It was only to be hoped that it would pass out of people's minds; that things would soon get into their usual train; and that it might be seven years before there was another election.

Hester complained to her husband and sister of the manner in which she was treated by the tradespeople of the place. She had desired to put herself on a footing of acquaintanceship with them, as neighbours, and persons with whom there must be a constant transaction of business for life. She saw at once the difference in the relation between tradespeople and their customers in a large town like Birmingham, and in a village where there is but one baker, where the grocer and hatter are the same personage, and where you cannot fly from your butcher, be he ever so much your foe. Hester therefore made it her business to transact, herself, all affairs with the village tradesmen. She began her housekeeping energetically, and might be seen in Mr. Jones's open shop in the coldest morning of January, selecting her joint of meat; or deciding among brown sugars at Tucker's, the grocer's. After the election, she found some difference in the manner of most of the shop-people towards

her; and she fancied more than there was. With some of these persons, there was no more in their minds than the consciousness of having discussed the new family and Mr. Hope's vote, and come to a conclusion against his 'principles.' With others, Mrs. Rowland's influence had done deeper mischief. A few words dropped by herself, or reports of her sayings, circulated by her servants, occasioned dislike or alarm which Hester's sensitiveness apprehended at once, and forthwith exaggerated. She complained to her husband that she could not go to the shops with any comfort, and that she thought she must turn over the house-keeping to Morris. Margaret remonstrated against this; and, by being her sister's constant companion in her walks of business as well as pleasure, hoped to be able to keep the peace, and to preserve or restore, if need were, a good understanding between parties who could most materially promote or injure each other's comfort. The leisure hours to which she had looked forward with such transport were all chequered with anxiety on this subject, in the intervals of speculation on another matter, to which she found her mind constantly recurring, in spite of her oft-repeated conviction that it was no concern of hers,—where Mr. Enderby was,—what he was doing,—and when he would come. Day by day, as she spread her books before her, or began to write, she wondered at her own listlessness

about employments to which she had looked forward with so much eagerness; and when she detected herself gazing into the fire by the half-hour together, or allowing the ink to dry in her suspended pen, she found that she was as far as ever from deciding whether Hester was not now in the way to be less happy than ever, and how it was that, with all her close friendship with Philip Enderby, of which she had spoken so confidently to Maria, she was now in perfect ignorance of his movements and intentions. The whole was very strange, and, in the experience, somewhat dreary.

Her great comfort was Edward: this was a new support and a strong one: but even here she was compelled to own herself somewhat disappointed. This brotherly relation, for which she had longed all her life, did not bring the fulness of satisfaction which she had anticipated. She had not a fault to find with Edward: she was always called upon by his daily conduct for admiration, esteem, and affection; but all this was not of the profit to her which she had expected. He seemed altered: the flow of his spirits was much moderated; but perhaps this was no loss, as his calmness, his gentle seriousness, and domestic benevolence, were brought out more strikingly than ever. Margaret's disappointment lay in the intercourse between themselves. That Edward was reserved, —that beneath his remarkable frankness there lay

an uncommunicativeness of disposition,—no one could before his marriage have made her believe: yet it certainly was so. Though Hester and she never discussed Edward's character, more or less, —though Hester's love for him, and Margaret's respect for that love, rendered all such conversation impossible, Margaret was perfectly well aware that Hester's conviction on this particular point was the same as her own,—that Hester had discovered that she had not fully understood her husband, and that there remained a region of his character into which she had not yet penetrated. Margaret was obliged to conclude that all this was natural and right, and that what she had heard said of men generally was true even of Edward Hope,—that there are depths of character, where there are not regions of experience, which defy the sympathy and sagacity of women. However natural and right all this might be, she could not but be sorry for it. It brought disappointment to herself, and, as she sadly suspected, to Hester. While continually and delightedly compelled to honour and regard him more and more, and to rely upon him as she had never before relied, she felt that he did not win, and even did not desire, any intimate confidence. She found that she could still say things to Maria which she could not say to him; and that, while their domestic conversation rarely flagged, — while it embraced a boundless range

of fact, and all that they could ascertain of morals, philosophy, and religion,—the greatest psychological events, the most interesting experiences of her life, might go forward without express recognition from Edward. Such was her view of the case; and this was the disappointment which, in the early days of her new mode of life, she had to acknowledge to herself, and to conceal from all others.

One fine bright morning towards the end of January, the sisters set out for their walk, willingly quitting the clear crackling fire within for the sharp air and sparkling pathways without.

"Which way shall we go?" asked Margaret.

"O, I suppose along the high-road, as usual. How provoking it is that we are prevented, day after day, from getting to the woods, by my snow-boots not having arrived! We will go by Mrs. Howell's, for the chance of their having come."

Mrs. Howell had two expressions of countenance—the gracious and the prim. Till lately, Hester had been favoured with the first exclusively. She was now to be amused with variety, and the prim was offered to her contemplation. Never did Mrs. Howell look more inaccessible than to-day, when she scarcely rose from her stool behind the counter, to learn what was the errand of her customer.

"You guess what I am come for, Mrs. Howell, I dare say. Have my boots arrived yet?"

"I am not aware of their having arrived, ma'am. But Miss Miskin—Miss Miskin is now occupied in that department."

"Only consider how the winter is getting on, Mrs. Howell! and I can walk nowhere but in the high-road, for want of my boots."

Mrs. Howell curtsied.

"Can you not hasten your agent, or help me to my boots, one way or another? Is there no one in Deerbrook whom you could employ to make me a pair?"

Mrs. Howell cast up her hands and eyes.

"How do other ladies manage to obtain their boots before the snow comes, instead of after it has melted?"

"Perhaps you will ask them yourself, ma'am: I conceive you know all the ladies in Deerbrook. You will find Miss Miskin in that department, ladies, if you wish to investigate."

Hester invaded the domain of Miss Miskin,—the shoe-shop behind the other counter—in the hope of finding something to put on her feet, which should enable her to walk where she pleased. While engaged in turning over the stock, without any help from Miss Miskin, who was imitating Mrs. Howell's distant manner with considerable success, a carriage drove up to the door, which

could be no other than Sir William Hunter's; and Lady Hunter's voice was accordingly heard, the next minute, asking for green sewing-silk. The gentle drawl of Mrs. Howell's tone conveyed that her countenance had resumed its primary expression. She observed upon the horrors of the fire which had happened at Blickley the night before. Lady Hunter had not heard of it; and the relation therefore followed, of the burning down of a house and shop in Blickley, when a nursemaid and baby were lost in the flames.

"I should hope it is not true," observed Lady Hunter. "Last night, did you say?—Early this morning? There has scarcely been time for the news to arrive of a fire at Blickley early this morning."

"It is certainly true, however, my lady. No doubt whatever of the catastrophe, I am grieved to say." And Mrs. Howell's sighs were sympathetically responded to by Miss Miskin in the back shop.

"But how did you hear it?" asked Lady Hunter.

There was no audible answer. There were probably signs and intimations of something; for Lady Hunter made a circuit round the shop, on some pretence, and stared in at the door of the shoe-parlour, just at the right moment for perceiving, if she so pleased, the beautiful smallness of

Hester's foot. Some low, murmuring, conversation then passed at Mrs. Howell's counter, when the words "black servant" alone met Margaret's ear.

Hester found nothing that she could wear. The more she pressed for information and assistance about obtaining boots, the more provokingly cool Miss Miskin grew. At last Hester turned to her sister with a hasty inquiry what was to be done.

"We must hope for better fortune before next winter, I suppose," said Margaret, smiling.

"And wet my feet every day this winter," said Hester; "for I will not be confined to the high road for any such reason as this."

"Dear me, ma'am, you are warm!" simpered Miss Miskin.

"I warm! What do you mean, Miss Miskin?"

"You are warm, ma'am:—not that it is of any consequence; but you are a little warm at present."

"Nobody can charge that upon you, Miss Miskin, I must say," observed Margaret, laughing.

"No, ma'am, that they cannot, nor ever will. I am not apt to be warm, and I hope I can excuse . . . Good morning, ladies."

Mrs. Howell treated her customers with a swimming curtsy as they went out, glancing at her shop-woman the while. Lady Hunter favoured them with a full stare.

"What excessive impertinence!" exclaimed Hester. "To tell me that I was warm, and she hoped she could excuse! My husband will hardly believe it."

"O yes, he will. He knows them for two ignorant, silly women; worth observing, perhaps, but not worth minding. Have you any other shop to go to?"

Yes, the tinman's, for a saucepan or two of a size not yet supplied, for which Morris had petitioned.

The tinman was either unable or not very anxious to understand Hester's requisitions. He brought out everything but what was wanted; and was so extremely interested in observing something that was going on over the way, that he was every moment casting glances abroad between the dutch-ovens and fenders that half-darkened his window. The ladies at last looked over the way too, and saw a gig containing a black footman standing before the opposite house.

"A stranger in Deerbrook!" observed Margaret, as they issued from the shop. "I do not wonder that Mr. Hill had so little attention to spare for us."

The sisters had been so accustomed, during all the years of their Birmingham life, to see faces that they did not know, that they could not yet sympathise with the emotions caused in Deerbrook

by the appearance of a stranger. They walked on, forgetting in conversation all about the gig and black servant. Hester had not been pleased by the insufficient attention she had met with in both the shops she had visited, and she did not enjoy her walk as was her wont. As they trod the crisp and glittering snow, Margaret hoped the little Rowlands and Greys were happy in making the snow-man which had been the vision of their imaginations since the winter set in: but Hester cast longing eyes on the dark woods which sprang from the sheeted meadows, and thought nothing could be so delightful as to wander among them, and gather icicles from the boughs, even though the paths should be ancle-deep in snow.

Just when they were proposing to turn back, a horseman appeared on the ridge of the rising ground over which the road passed. "It is Edward!" cried Hester. "I had no idea we should meet him on this road." And she quickened her pace, and her countenance brightened as if she had not seen him for a month. Before they met him, however, the gig with the black footman, now containing also a gentleman driving, overtook and slowly passed them,—the gentleman looking round him, as if in search of some dwelling hereabouts. On approaching Hope, the gentlemen drew up, touched his hat, and asked a question; and on receiving the answer, bowed, turned round, and

repassed Hester and Margaret. Hope joined his wife and sister, and walked his horse beside the path.

"Who is that gentleman, Edward?"

"I believe it is Mr. Foster, the surgeon at Blickley."

"What did he want with you?"

"He wanted to know whether he was in the right road to the Russell Taylors."

"The Russell Taylors! Your patients!"

"Once my patients, but no longer so. It seems they are Mr. Foster's patients now."

Hester made no reply.

"Can you see from your pathway what is going on below there in the meadow? I see the skaters very busy on the ponds. Why do not you go there, instead of walking here every day?"

Margaret had to explain the case about the snow-boots, for Hester's face was bathed in tears. Edward rallied her gently; but it would not do. She motioned to him to ride on, and he thought it best to do so. The sisters proceeded in silence, Hester's tears flowing faster and faster. Instead of walking through Deerbrook, she took a back road homewards, and drew down her veil. As ill luck would have it, however, they met Sophia Grey and her sisters, and Sophia would stop. She was about to turn back with them, when she saw that something was the matter, and then she

checked herself awkwardly, and wished her cousins good morning, while Fanny and Mary were staring at Hester.

"One ought not to mind," said Margaret, half-laughing: "there are so many causes for grown people's tears! but I always feel now as I did when I was a child,—a shame at being seen in tears, and an excessive desire to tell people that I have not been naughty."

"You could not have told Sophia so of me, I am sure," said Hester.

"Yes, I could; you are not crying because you have been naughty, but you are naughty because you cry; and that may be cured presently."

It was not presently cured, however. During the whole of dinner-time, Hester's tears continued to flow; and she could not eat, though she made efforts to do so. Edward and Margaret talked a great deal about skating and snow-men, and about the fire at Blickley; but they came to a stand at last. The footboy went about on tiptoe, and shut the door as if he had been in a sick-room; and this made Hester's short sobs only the more audible. It was a relief when the oranges were on the table at last, and the door closed behind the dinner and the boy. Margaret began to peel an orange for her sister, and Edward poured out a glass of wine; he placed it before her, and then drew his chair to her side, saying,—

"Now, my dear, let us get to the bottom of all this distress."

"No, do not try, Edward. Never mind me! I shall get the better of this, by-and-bye: only let me alone."

"Thank you!" said Hope, smiling. "I like to see people reasonable! I am to see you sorrowing in this way, and for very sufficient cause, and I am neither to mind your troubles nor my own, but to be as merry as if nothing had happened! Is not this reasonable, Margaret?"

"For very sufficient cause!" said Hester, eagerly.

"Yes, indeed; for very sufficient cause. It must be a painful thing to you to find my neighbours beginning to dislike me; to have the tradespeople impertinent to you on my account; to see my patients leave me, and call in somebody from a distance, in the face of all Deerbrook. It must make you anxious to think what is to become of us, if the discontent continues and spreads: and it must be a bitter disappointment to you to find that to be my wife is not to be so happy as we expected. Here is cause enough for tears."

In the midst of her grief, Hester looked up at her husband with an expression of gratitude and tenderness which consoled him for her.

"I will not answer for it," he continued, "but that we may all three sit down to weep together, one of these days."

"And then," said Margaret, "Hester will be the first to cheer up and comfort us."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Hope. "Meantime, is there anything that you would have had done otherwise by me? Was I right or not to vote? and was there anything wrong in my manner of doing it? Is there any cause whatever for repentance?"

"None, none," cried Hester. "You have been right throughout. I glory in all you do."

"To me it seems that you could not have done otherwise," observed Margaret. "It was a simple, unavoidable act, done with the simplicity of affairs which happen in natural course. I neither repent it for you, nor glory in it."

"That is just my view of it, Margaret. And it follows that the consequences are to be taken as coming in natural course too. Does not this again simplify the affair, Hester?"

"It lights it up," replied Hester. "It reminds me how all would have been if you had acted otherwise than as you did. It is, to be sure, scarcely possible to conceive of such a thing,—but if you had not voted, I should have—not despised you in any degree,—but lost confidence in you a little."

"That is a very mild way of putting it," said Hope, laughing.

"Thank Heaven, we are spared that!" exclaimed Margaret. "But, brother, tell us the worst that you think can come of this displeasure against you. I rather suspect, however, that we have suffered the worst already, in discovering that people can be displeased with you."

"That being so extremely rare a lot in this world, and especially in the world of a village," replied Hope. "I really do not know what to expect as the last result of this affair, nor am I anxious to foresee. I never liked the sort of attachment that most of my neighbours have testified for me. It was to their honour in as far as it showed kindness of heart; but it was unreasonable: so unreasonable that I imagine the opposite feelings which are now succeeding, may be just as much in excess. Suppose it should be so, Hester."

"Well, what then?" she asked, sighing.

"Suppose our neighbours should send me to Coventry, and my patients should leave me, so far as that we should not have enough to live on."

"That would be persecution," cried Hester, brightening. "I could bear persecution,—downright persecution."

"You could bear seeing your husband torn by lions in the amphitheatre," said Margaret, smiling, "but . . . "

"But a toss of Mrs. Howell's head is unendurable," said Hope, with solemnity.

Hester looked down, blushing like a chidden child.

"But about this persecution," said she. "What made you ask those questions just now?"

"I find my neighbours more angry with me than I could have supposed possible, my dear. I have been treated with great and growing rudeness for some days. In a place like this, you know, offences seldom come alone. If you do a thing which a village public does not approve, there will be offence in whatever else you say and do, for some time after. And I suspect that is my case now. I may be mistaken, however; and whatever happens, I hope, my love, we shall all be to the last degree careful not to see offence where it is not intended."

"Not to do the very thing we are suffering under ourselves," observed Margaret.

"We will not watch our neighbours, and canvass their opinions of us by our own fireside," said Hope. "We will conclude them all to be our friends till they give us clear evidence to the contrary. Shall it not be so, love?"

"I know what you mean," said Hester, with some resentment in her voice and manner. "You cannot trust my temper in your affairs; and you are perfectly right. My temper is not to be trusted."

"Very few are, in the first agonies of unpopularity; and such faith in one's neighbours as shall supersede watching them, ought hardly to be

looked for in the atmosphere of Deerbrook. We must all look to ourselves."

"I understand you," said Hester. "I take the lesson home, I assure you. It is clear to me through your cautious phrase,—the 'we,' and 'all of us,' and 'ourselves.' But remember this,—that people are not made alike, and are not able, and not intended to feel alike; and if some have less power than others over their sorrow, at least over their tears, it does not follow that they cannot bear as well what they have to bear. If I cannot sit looking as Margaret does, peeling oranges and philosophising, it may not be that I have less strength at my heart, but that I have more at stake,—more—"

Hope started from her side, and leaned against the mantel-piece, covering his face with his hands. At this moment, the boy entered with a message from a patient in the next street, who wanted Mr. Hope.

"O, do not leave me, Edward! Do not leave me at this moment!" cried Hester. "Come back for five minutes!"

Hope quietly said that he should return presently, and went out. When the hall door was heard to close behind him, Hester flung herself down on the sofa. Whatever momentary resentment Margaret might have felt at her sister's words, it vanished at the sight of Hester's attitude

of wretchedness. She sat on a footstool beside the sofa, and took her sister's hand in hers.

"You are kinder to me than I deserve," murmured Hester: "but, Margaret, mind what I say! never marry, Margaret! Never love, and never marry, Margaret!"

Margaret laid her hand on her sister's shoulder, saying—"Stop here, Hester! While I was the only friend you had, it was right and kind to tell me all that was in your heart. But now that there is one nearer and dearer, and far, far worthier than I, I can hear nothing like this. Nor are you fit, just now, to speak of these serious things: you are discomposed—"

"One would think you were echoing Miss Miskin, Margaret,—'You are warm, ma'am.' But you must hear this much. I insist upon it. If you would have heard me, you would have found that I was not going to say a word about my husband, inconsistent with all the love and honour you would have him enjoy. I assure you, you might trust me not to complain of my husband. I have no words in which to say how noble he is. But O! it is all true about the wretchedness of married life! I am wretched, Margaret."

"So I see," said Margaret, in deep sorrow.

"Life is a blank to me. I have no hope left. I am neither wiser, nor better, nor happier, for God having given me all that should make a woman

what I meant to be. What can God give me more than I have?"

"I was just thinking so," replied Margaret, mournfully.

"What follows then?"

"Not that all married people are unhappy because you are."

"Yes, O yes! all who are capable of happiness: all who can love. The truth is, there is no perfect confidence in the world: there is no rest for one's heart. I believed there was, and I am disappointed: and if you believe there is, you will be disappointed too. I warn you."

"I shall not neglect your warning; but I do believe there is rest for rational affections,—I am confident there is, if the primary condition is fulfilled,—if there is repose in God together with human love."

"You think that trust in God is wanting in me."

"Do let us speak of something else," said Margaret. "We are wrong to think and talk of ourselves as we do. There is something sickly about our state while we do so, and we deserve to be suffering as we are. Come! let us be up and doing. Let me read to you; or will you practise with me till Edward comes back?"

"Not till you have answered my question, Margaret. Do you believe that my wretchedness is from want of trust in God?"

"I believe," said Margaret, seriously, "that all restless and passionate suffering is from that cause. And now, Hester, no more."

Hester allowed Margaret to read to her; but it would not do. She was too highly wrought up for common interests. The reading was broken off by her hysterical sobs; and it was clear that the best thing to be done was to get her to bed, under Morris's care, that all agitating conversation might be avoided. When Mr. Hope returned, he found Margaret sitting alone at the tea-table. If she had had no greater power of self-control than her sister, Edward might have been made wretched enough, for her heart was full of dismay: but she felt the importance of the duty of supporting him, and he found her, though serious, apparently cheerful.

"I have sent Hester to bed," said she, as he entered. "She was worn out. Yes: just go and speak to her; but do not give her the opportunity of any more conversation till she has slept. Tell her that I am going to send her some tea; and by that time yours will be ready."

"Just one word upon the events of to-day," said Hope, as he took his seat at the tea-table, after having reported that Hester was tolerably composed:—"just one word, and no more. We must avoid bringing emotions to a point,—giving occasion for ——"

"I entirely agree with you," said Margaret. "She requires to be drawn out of herself. She cannot bear that opening of the sluices, which is a benefit and comfort to some people. Let us keep them shut; and when it comes to acting, see how she will act!"

"Bless you for that!" was on Hope's lips; but he did not say it. Tea was soon dismissed, and he then took up the newspaper; and when that was finished, he found he could not read to Margaret,—he must write:—he had a case to report for a medical journal.

"I hope I have not spoiled your evening," said Hester, languidly, when her sister went to bid her good-night. "I have been listening; but I could not hear you either laughing or talking."

"Because we have been neither laughing nor talking. My brother has been writing ——"

"Writing! To whom? To Emily, or to Anne?"

"To a far more redoubtable person than either: to the editor of some one of those green and blue periodicals that he devours, as if they were poetry. And I have been copying music."

"How tired you look!"

"Well, then, good-night!"

Margaret might well look tired; but she did not go to rest for long. How should she rest, while her soul was sick with dismay, her heart weighed

down with disappointment, her sister's sobs still sounding in her ear, her sister's agonized countenance rising up from moment to moment, as often as she closed her eyes? And all this within the sacred enclosure of home, in the very sanctuary of peace! All this where love had guided the suffering one to marriage—where there was present neither sickness, nor calamity, nor guilt, but the very opposites of all these! Could it then be true, that the only sanctuary of peace is in the heart? that while love is the master passion of humanity, the main-spring of human action, the crowning interest of human life,—while it is ordained, natural, inevitable, it should issue as if it were discountenanced by Providence, unnatural, and to be repelled? Could it be so? Was Hester's warning against love, against marriage, reasonable, and to be regarded? That warning Margaret thought she could never put aside, so heavily had it sunk upon her heart, crushing — she knew not what there. If it was not a reasonable warning, whither should she turn for consolation for Hester? If this misery arose out of an incapacity in Hester herself for happiness in domestic life, then farewell sisterly comfort—farewell all the bright visions she had ever indulged on behalf of the one who had always been her nearest and dearest! Instead of these, there must be struggle and grief, far deeper than in the anxious years that were gone;

struggle with an evil which must grow if it does not diminish, and grief for an added sufferer,—for one who deserved blessing where he was destined to receive torture. This was not the first time by a hundred that Hester had kept Margaret from her pillow, and then driven rest from it; but never had the trial been so great as now. There had been anxiety formerly; now there was something like despair, after an interval of hope and comparative ease.

Mankind are ignorant enough, Heaven knows, both in the mass, about general interests, and individually, about the things which belong to their peace: but of all mortals, none perhaps are so awfully self-deluded as the unamiable. They do not, any more than others, sin for the sake of sinning; but the amount of woe caused by their selfish unconsciousness is such as may well make their weakness an equivalent for other men's gravest crimes. There is a great diversity of hiding-places for their consciences,—many mansions in the dim prison of discontent: but it may be doubted whether, in the hour when all shall be uncovered to the eternal day, there will be revealed a lower deep than the hell which they have made. They, perhaps, are the only order of evil ones who suffer hell without seeing and knowing that it is hell. But they are under a heavier curse even than this; they inflict torments, second only to their own,

with an unconsciousness almost worthy of spirits of light. While they complacently conclude themselves the victims of others, or pronounce, inwardly or aloud, that they are too singular, or too refined, for common appreciation, they are putting in motion an enginery of torture whose aspect will one day blast their minds' sight. The dumb groans of their victims will sooner or later return upon their ears from the depths of the heaven to which the sorrows of men daily ascend. The spirit sinks under the prospect of the retribution of the unamiable, if all that happens be indeed for eternity,—if there be indeed a record,—an impress on some one or other human spirit,—of every chilling frown, of every querulous tone, of every bitter jest, of every insulting word,—of all abuses of that tremendous power which mind has over mind. The throbbing pulses, the quivering nerves, the wrung hearts, that surround the unamiable,—what a cloud of witnesses is here! and what plea shall avail against them? The terror of innocents who should know no fear,—the vindictive emotions of dependants who dare not complain,—the faintness of heart of life-long companions,—the anguish of those who love,—the unholy exultation of those who hate,—what an array of judges is here! and where can an appeal be lodged against their sentence? Is pride of singularity a rational plea? Is super-refinement, or

circumstance from God, or uncongeniality in man, a sufficient ground of appeal, when the refinement of one is a grace granted for the luxury of all, when circumstance is given to be conquered, and uncongeniality is appointed for discipline? The sensualist has brutified the seraphic nature with which he was endowed. The depredator has intercepted the rewards of toil, and marred the image of justice, and dimmed the lustre of faith in men's minds. The imperial tyrant has invoked a whirlwind, to lay waste, for an hour of God's eternal year, some region of society. But the unamiable,—the domestic torturer,—has heaped wrong upon wrong, and woe upon woe, through the whole portion of time which was given into his power, till it would be rash to say that any others are more guilty than he. If there be hope or solace for such, it is that there may have been tempers about him the opposite of his own. It is matter of humiliating gratitude that there were some which he could not ruin; and that he was the medium of discipline by which they were exercised in forbearance, in divine forgiveness and love. If there be solace in such an occasional result, let it be made the most of by those who need it; for it is the only possible alleviation to their remorse. Let them accept it as the free gift of a mercy which they have insulted, and a long-suffering which they have defied.

Not thus, however, did Margaret regard the case of her sister. She had but of late ceased to suppose herself in the wrong when Hester was unhappy; and though she was now relieved from the responsibility of her sister's peace, she was slow to blame—reluctant to class the case lower than as one of infirmity. Her last waking thoughts (and they were very late) were of pity and of prayer.

As the door closed behind Margaret, Hope had flung down his pen. In one moment she had returned for a book; and she found him by the fire-side, leaning his head upon his arms against the wall. There was something in his attitude which startled her out of her wish for her book, and she quietly withdrew without it. He turned, and spoke, but she was gone.

"So this is home!" thought he, as he surveyed the room, filled as it was with tokens of occupation, and appliances of domestic life. "It is home to be more lonely than ever before—and yet never to be alone with my secret! At my own table, by my own hearth, I cannot look up into the faces around me, nor say what I am thinking. In every act and every word I am in danger of disturbing the innocent—even of sullying the pure, and of breaking the bruised reed. Would to God I had never seen them!—How have I abhorred bondage all my life! and I am in bondage every hour that

I spend at home. I have always insisted that there was no bondage but in guilt. Is it so? If it be so, then I am either guilty, or in reality free. I have settled this before. I am guilty; or rather, I have been guilty; and this is my retribution. Not guilty towards Margaret. Thank God, I have done her no wrong! Thank God, I have never been in her eyes—what I must not think of! Nor could I ever have been, if . . . She loves Enderby, I am certain, though she does not know it herself. It is a blessing that she loves him, if I could but always feel it so. I am not guilty towards her—nor towards Hester, except in the weakness of declining to inflict that suffering upon her which, fearful as it must have been, might perhaps have proved less than, with all my care, she must undergo now. There was my fault. I did not, I declare, seek to attach her. I did nothing wrong so far. But I dared to measure suffering—to calculate consequences presumptuously and vainly; and this is my retribution. How would it have been, if I had allowed them to go back to Birmingham, and had been haunted with the image of her there? But why go over this again, when my very soul is weary of it all? It lies behind, and let it be forgotten. The present is what I have to do with, and it is quite enough. I have injured, cruelly injured, myself, and I must bear with myself. Here I am, charged with the

duty of not casting my shadow over the innocent, and of strengthening the infirm. I have a clear duty before me—that is one blessing. The innocent will soon be taken from under my shadow—I trust so—for my duty there is almost too hard. How she would confide in me! and I must not let her, and must continually disappoint her, and suffer in her affection. I cannot even be to her what our relation warrants. And all the while her thoughts are my thoughts; her . . . But this will never do. It is enough that she trusts me, and that I deserve that she should. This is all that I can ever have or hope for; but I have won thus much, and I shall keep it. Not a doubt or fear, not a moment's ruffle of spirits, shall she ever experience from me. As for my own poor sufferer—what months and years are before us both! What a discipline before she can be at peace! If she were to look forward as I do, her heart would sink as mine does, and perhaps she would try .... But we must not look forward: her heart must not sink. I must keep it up. She has strength under her weakness, and I must help her to bring it out and use it. There ought to be, there must be, peace in store for such generosity of spirit as lies under the jealousy,—for such devotedness, for such power. Margaret says, 'When it comes to acting, see how she will act!' O that it might please Heaven to send such adversity as would prove to herself how nobly she can

act! If some strong call on her power would come in aid of what I would fain do for her, I care not what it is. If I can only witness my own wrong repaired,—if I can but see her blessed from within, let all other things be as they may! The very thought frees me, and I breathe again."

CHAPTER IV.

ENDERBY NEWS.

"MAMA, what do you think Fanny and Mary Grey say?" asked Matilda of her mother.

"My dear, I wish you would not tease me with what the Greys say. They say very little that is worth repeating."

"Well, but you must hear this, mama. Fanny and Mary were walking with Sophia yesterday, and they met Mrs. Hope and Miss Ibbotson in Turn-stile Lane; and Mrs. Hope was crying so, you can't think."

"Indeed! Crying? What, in the middle of the day?"

"Yes; just before dinner. She had her veil down, and she did not want to stop, evidently, mama. She . . . ."

"I should wonder if she did," observed Mr. Rowland, from the other side of the newspaper he was reading. "If Dr. and Mrs. Levitt were to come in the next time you cry, Matilda, you would not want to stay in the parlour, evidently, I should

think. For my part, I never show my face when I am crying."

"You cry, papa!" cried little Anna. "Do you ever cry?"

"Have you never found me behind the deals, or among the sacks in the granary, with my finger in my eye?"

"No, papa. Do show us how you look when you cry."

Mr. Rowland's face, all dolefulness, emerged from behind the newspaper, and the children shouted.

"But," said Matilda, observing that her mother's brow began to lower, "I think it is very odd that Mrs. Hope did not stay at home if she wanted to cry. It is so very odd to go crying about the streets!"

"I dare say Deerbrook is very much obliged to her," said papa. "It will be something to talk about for a week."

"But what could she be crying for, papa?"

"Suppose you ask her, my dear. Had you not better put on your bonnet, and go directly to Mr. Hope's, and ask, with our compliments, what Mrs. Hope was crying for at four o'clock yesterday afternoon? Of course she can tell better than anybody else."

"Nonsense, Mr. Rowland," observed his lady. "Go, children, it is very near school-time."

"No, mama; not by ——"

"Go, I insist upon it, Matilda. I will have you do as you are bid. Go, George; go, Anna. —Now, my love, did I not tell you so, long ago? Do not you remember my observing to you, how coldly Mr. Hope took our congratulations on his engagement in the summer? I was sure there was something wrong. They are not happy, depend upon it."

"What a charming discovery that would be!"

"You are very provoking, Mr. Rowland! I do believe you try to imitate Mr. Grey's dry way of talking to his wife."

"I thought I had heard you admire that way, my dear."

"For her: yes; it does very well for a woman like her: but I beg you will not try it upon me, Mr. Rowland."

"Well, then, Mrs. Rowland, I am going to be as serious as ever I was in my life, when I warn you how you breathe such a suspicion as that the Hopes are not happy. Remember you have no evidence whatever about the matter. When you offered Mr. Hope your congratulations, he was feeble from illness, and probably too much exhausted at the moment to show any feeling, one way or another. And as for this crying fit of Mrs. Hope's, no one is better able than you, my dear, to tell how many causes there

may be for ladies' tears besides being unhappily married."

"Pray, Mr. Rowland, make yourself easy, I beg. Whom do you suppose I should mention such a thing to?"

"You have already mentioned it to yourself and me, my dear, which is just two persons too many. Not a word more on the subject, if you please."

Mrs. Rowland saw that this was one of her husband's authority days;—rare days, when she could not have her own way, and her quiet husband was really formidable. She buckled on her armour, therefore, forthwith. That armour was—silence. Mr. Rowland was sufficiently aware of the process now to be gone through, to avoid speaking, when he knew he should obtain no reply. He finished his newspaper without further remark, looked out a book from the shelves, half-whistling all the while, and left the room.

Meantime, the children had gone to the school-room, disturbing Miss Young nearly an hour too soon. Miss Young told them she was not at liberty; and when she heard that their mama had sent them away from the drawing-room, she asked why they could not play as usual. It was so cold! How did George manage to play? George had not come in with the rest. If he could play, so could they. The little girls had no doubt George would present himself soon: they did not know

where he had run; but he would soon have enough of the cold abroad, or of the dulness of the nursery. In another moment Miss Young was informed of the fact of Hester's tears of yesterday; and, much as she wanted the time she was deprived of, she was glad the children had come to her, that this piece of gossip might be stopped. She went somewhat at length with them into the subject of tears, showing that it is very hasty to conclude that any one has been doing wrong, even in the case of a child's weeping; and much more with regard to grown people. When they had arrived at wondering whether some poor person had been begging of Mrs. Hope, or whether one of Mr. Hope's patients that she cared about was very ill, or whether anybody had been telling her an affecting story, Miss Young brought them to see that they ought not to wish to know;—that they should no more desire to read Mrs. Hope's thoughts than to look over her shoulder while she was writing a letter. She was just telling them a story of a friend of hers who called on an old gentleman, and found him in very low spirits, with his eyes all red and swollen; and how her friend did not know whether to take any notice; and how the truth came out,—that the old gentleman had been reading a touching story:—she was just coming to the end of this anecdote, when the door opened, and Margaret entered, holding George by the hand. Margaret looked rather grave, and said,

"I thought I had better come to you first, Maria, for an explanation which you may be able to give. Do you know who sent little George with a message to my sister just now? I concluded you did not. George has been calling at my brother's door, with his papa's and mama's compliments, and a request to know what Mrs. Hope was crying for yesterday, at four o'clock."

Maria covered her face with her hands, with as much shame as if she had been in fault, while "O, George!" was reproachfully uttered by the little girls.

"Matilda," said Miss Young, "I trust you to go straight to your papa, without saying a word of this to any one else, and to ask him to come here this moment. I trust you, my dear."

Matilda discharged her trust. She peeped into the drawing-room, and popped out again without speaking, when she saw papa was no longer there. She found him in the office, and brought him, without giving any hint of what had happened. He was full of concern, of course; said that he could not blame George, though he was certainly much surprised; that it would be a lesson to him not to use irony with children, since even the broadest might be thus misunderstood; and that a little family scene had thus been laid open, which he should hardly regret if it duly impressed his children with the folly and unkindness of village

gossip. He declared he could not be satisfied without apologizing,—well, then, without explaining to Mrs. Hope how it had happened; and he would do it through the medium of Mr. Hope; for, to say the truth, he was ashamed to face Mrs. Hope till his peace was made. Margaret laughed at this, and begged him to go home with her; but he preferred stepping over to Mrs. Enderby's, where Mr. Hope had just been seen to enter. Mr. Rowland concluded by saying, that he should accept it as a favour in Miss Ibbotson, as well as Miss Young, if she would steadily refuse to gratify any impertinent curiosity shown by his children, in whatever direction it might show itself. They were exposed to great danger from example in Deerbrook, like most children brought up in small villages, he supposed: and he owned he dreaded the idea of his children growing up the scourges to society that he considered foolish and malignant gossips to be.

"Do sit down, Margaret," said Maria. "I shall feel uncomfortable when you are gone, if you do not stay a minute, to turn our thoughts to something pleasanter than this terrible mistake of poor George's."

"I cannot stay now, however," said Margaret, smiling. "You know I must go and turn my sister's thoughts to something pleasanter. There

she is, sitting at home, waiting to know how all this has happened."

"Whether she has not been insulted. You are right, Margaret. Make haste back to her, and beg her pardon for us all. Shall she not, children, if she will be so kind?"

Margaret was overwhelmed with the petitions for pardon she had to carry; and not one of the children asked what Mrs. Hope had been crying for, after all.

Hester looked up anxiously as Margaret entered the drawing-room at home.

"It is all a trifle," said Margaret, gaily.

"How can it be a trifle?"

"The little Greys told what they saw yesterday, of course; and one of the little Rowlands wondered what was the reason;—(children can never understand what grown people, who have no lessons to learn, can cry for, you know;) and Mr. Rowland, to make their gossip ridiculous to themselves, told them they had better come and ask; and poor George, who cannot take a joke, came, without any one knowing where he was gone. They were all in great consternation when I told them, and there is an ample apology coming to you through Edward. That is the whole story, except that Mr. Rowland would have come himself to you, instead of going to your husband, but that he was ashamed of his joke. So there is an end of that silly matter,

unless it be to make George always ask henceforth whether people are in joke or in earnest."

"I think Mr. Rowland might have come to me," observed Hester. "Are you sure Mrs. Rowland had nothing to do with it?"

"I neither saw her nor heard of her. You had better not go out to-day, it is so like snow. I shall be back soon; but as I have my bonnet on, I shall go and see Johnny Rye and his mother. Can I do anything for you?"

"O my snow-boots! But I would not have you go to Mrs. Howell's while she is in such a mood as she was in yesterday. I would not go myself."

"O! I will go. I am not afraid of Mrs. Howell; and we shall have to encounter her again, sooner or later. I will buy something, and then see what my diplomacy will effect about the boots."

Mr. Hope presently came in, and found his wife prepared for the apology he brought from Mr. Rowland. But it was obvious that Hope's mind was far more occupied with something else.

"Where is Margaret?"

"She is gone out to widow Rye's, and to Mrs. Howell's."

"No matter where, as long as she is out. I want to consult you about something. And he drew a chair to the fire, and told that he had visited Mrs. Enderby, whom he found very poorly,

apparently from agitation of spirits. She had shed a few tears on reporting of her health, and had dropped something which he could not understand, about this being almost the last time she should be able to speak freely to him. Hester anxiously hoped that the good old lady was not really going to die. There was no near probability of this, her husband assured her. He thought Mrs. Enderby referred to some other change than dying; but what, she did not explain. She had gone on talking in rather an excited way, and at last hinted that she supposed she should not see her son for some time, as Mrs. Rowland had intimated that he was fully occupied with the young lady he was going to be married to. Mrs. Enderby plainly said that she had not heard this from Philip himself; but she seemed to entertain no doubt of the truth of the information she had received. She appeared to be struggling to be glad at the news; but it was clear that the uppermost feeling was disappointment at having no immediate prospect of seeing her son.

"Now, what are we to think and do?" said Hope.

"This agrees with what Mrs. Rowland told me in Dingleford woods, six months ago," said Hester; "and I suppose what she then said may have been true all this time."

"How does that agree with his conduct to

Margaret? Or am I mistaken in what I have told you I thought about that? Seriously,—very seriously,—how do you suppose the case stands with Margaret?"

"I know no more than you. I think he went further than he ought, if he was thinking of another: and, but for his conduct since, I should have quite concluded, from some observations that I made, that he was attached to Margaret."

"And she . . . ?"

"And she certainly likes him very well; but I can hardly fancy her happiness at stake. I have thought her spirits rather flat of late."

Hope sighed deeply.

"Ah! you may well sigh," said Hester, sighing herself, and sinking back in her chair. "You know what I am going to say. I thought I might be the cause of her being less gay than she should be. I have disappointed her expectations, I know. But let us talk only of her."

"Yes: let us talk only of her, till we have settled what is our duty to her. Ought we to tell her of this or not?"

Both considered long. At length Hester said,

"I think she ought to hear it quietly at home first (whether it be true or not), to prepare her for anything that may be reported abroad. Perhaps, if you were to drop, as we sit together here, what Mrs. Enderby said . . . "

"No, no; not I," said Hope, quickly. He went on more calmly, "Her sister and bosom friend is the only person to do this,—if indeed it ought to be done. But the news may be untrue; and then she need perhaps never hear it. Do not let us be in a hurry."

Hester thought that if Margaret felt nothing more than friendship for Enderby, she would still consider herself ill-used; for the friendship had been so close an one that she might reasonably expect that she should not be left to learn such an event as this from common report. But was it certain, Hope asked, that she had anything new to learn? Was it certain that she was not in his confidence all this time,—that she had not known ten times as much as Mrs. Rowland, from the beginning? Certainly not from the beginning, Hester said; and she had a strong persuasion that Margaret was as ignorant as themselves of Enderby's present proceedings and intentions.

At this moment, a note was brought in. It was from Mrs. Enderby to Mr. Hope, written hurriedly, and blistered with tears. It told that she had been extremely wrong in mentioning to him prematurely what was uppermost in her mind about a certain family affair, and begged the great favour of him to keep to himself what she had divulged, and, if possible, to forget it. Once more, Mr. Hope unconsciously sighed. It was

at the idea that he could forget such a piece of intelligence.

"Poor old lady!" said Hester; "she has been taken to task, I suppose, for relieving her mind to you. But, Edward, this looks more and more as if the news were true. My darling Margaret! How will it be with her? Does it not look too like being true, love?"

"It looks as if Enderby's family all believed it, certainly. This note settles the matter of our duty, however. If the affair is so private that Mrs. Enderby is to be punished for telling me, it is hardly likely that Margaret will hear it by out-door chance. You are spared the task for the present at least, my dear!"

"I should like to be sure that Margaret does not love,—that she might pass through life without loving," said Hester, sighing. "But here she comes! Burn the note!"

The note curled in the flames, was consumed, and its ashes fluttered up the chimney, and Margaret did not enter. She had gone straight upstairs. She did not come down till dinner was on the table. She was then prepared with the announcement that the snow-boots might be looked for very soon. She told of her visit to widow Rye's, and had something to say of the probability of snow; but she was rather absent, and she took wine. These were all the circumstances that her

anxious sister could fix upon, during dinner, for silent comment. After dinner, having eaten an orange with something like avidity, Margaret withdrew for a very few minutes. As the door closed behind her, Hester whispered—

"She has heard. She knows. Is it not so?"

"There is no question about it," replied Hope, examining the screen he held in his hand.

"I wonder who can have told her."

"Tellers of bad news are never wanting, especially in Deerbrook," said Hope, with a bitterness of tone which Hester had never heard from him before.

Margaret took up the other screen when she returned, and played with it till the table was cleared, so that she could have the use of her workbox. It was Morris who removed the dessert.

"Morris," said Mr. Hope, as she was leaving the room, "I want Charles: pray send him."

"Charles is out, sir."

"Out! when will he be back?"

"He will be back presently," said Margaret. "I sent him with a note to Maria."

As she leant over her work again, Hester and her husband exchanged glances.

An answer from Maria soon arrived. Margaret read it as she sat, her brother and sister carefully withdrawing their observation from her. Whatever else might be in the note, she read alou the

latter part,—two or three lines relating to the incident of the morning. Her voice was husky, but her manner was gay. During the whole evening she was gay. She insisted on making tea, and was too quick with the kettle for Edward to help her. She proposed music, and she sang,—song after song. Hester was completely relieved about her; and even Edward gave himself up to the hope that all was well with her. From music they got to dancing. Margaret had learned, by sitting with Maria during the children's dancing-lesson, a new dance which had struck her fancy, and they must be ready with it next week at Dr. Levitt's. Alternately playing the dance and teaching it, she ran from the piano to them, and from them to the piano, till they were perfect, and her face was as flushed as it could possibly be at Mrs. Levitt's dance next week. But in the midst of this flush, Hope saw a shiver: and Hester remarked, that during the teaching, Margaret had, evidently without being aware of it, squeezed her hand with a force which could not have been supposed to be in her. These things made Hope still doubt.

CHAPTER V.

CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE UNCONSCIOUS.

Mr. Hope might well doubt. Margaret was not gay but desperate. Yes, even the innocent may be desperate under circumstances of education and custom, by which feelings natural and inevitable are made occasions of shame, while others, which are wrong and against the better nature of man, bask in daylight and impunity. There was not a famishing wretch, prowling about a baker's door, more desperate than Margaret this day. There was not a gambler, setting his teeth while watching the last turn of the die, more desperate than Margaret this day. If there was a criminal standing above a sea of faces, with the abominable executioner's hands about his throat, Margaret was, for the time, as wretched as he.

If any ask why,—why it should be thus with one who has done no wrong, the answer is—Why is there pride in the human heart?—why is there a particular nurture of this pride into womanly reserve?—Why is it that love is the chief expe-

rience, and almost the only object, of a woman's life? Why is it that it is painful to beings who look before and after to have the one hope of existence dashed away,—the generous faith outraged,—all self-confidence overthrown,—life in one moment made dreary as the desert,—Heaven itself over-clouded,—and death all the while standing at such a weary distance that there is no refuge within the horizon of endurance? Be these things right or wrong, they are: and while they are, will the woman who loves unrequited feel desperate on the discovery of her loneliness,—and, the more pure and proud, innocent and humble, the more lonely.

For some little time past, Margaret had been in a state of great tranquillity about Philip,—a tranquillity which she now much wondered at,—now that it was all over. She had had an unconscious faith in him; and, living in this faith, she had forgotten herself, she had not thought of the future, she had not felt impatient for any change. Often as she wished for his presence, irksome as she had sometimes felt it to know nothing of him from week to week, she had been tacitly satisfied that she was in his thoughts as he was in hers; and this had been enough for the time. What an awakening from this quiescent state was hers this day!

It was from no other than Dr. Levitt that she had heard in the morning that Mr. Enderby was shortly going to be married to Miss Mary Bruce.

Dr. Levitt was at widow Rye's when Margaret went, and had walked part of the way home with her. During the walk, this piece of news had dropped out, while they were talking of Mrs. Enderby's health. All that Dr. Levitt knew of Miss Mary Bruce was, that she was of sufficiently good family and fortune to make the Rowlands extremely well satisfied with the match; that Mrs. Enderby had never seen her, and that it would be some time before she could see her, as the whole family of the Bruces was at Rome for the winter. When Dr. Levitt parted from Margaret at the gate of the church-yard, these last words contained the hope she clung to,—a hope which might turn into the deepest reason for despair. Philip had certainly not been abroad. Was it likely that he should lately have become engaged to any young lady who had been some time in Rome? It was not likely: but then, if it was true, he must have been long engaged: he must have been engaged at the time of his last visit of six days, when he had talked over his views of life with Margaret, and been so anxious to obtain hers:—he must surely have been engaged in the summer, when she found Tieck in the desk, and when he used to spend so many evenings at the Greys';—certainly not on Hester's account. At one moment she was confident all this could not be; she was relieved; she stepped lightly. The next moment, a misgiving came that

it was all too true; the weight fell again upon her heart, she lost breath, and it was intolerable to have to curtsy to Mrs. James, and to answer the butcher's inquiry about the meat that had been ordered. If these people would only go on with their own business, and take no notice of her! Then, again, the thought occurred, that she knew Philip better than any,—than even his own family; and that, say what they might, he was all her own. In these changes of mood, she had got through dinner; the dominant idea was then that she must, by some means or other, obtain certainty. She thought of Maria. Maria was likely to know the facts, from her constant intercourse with the Rowlands: and besides, there was certainly a something in Maria's mind, in relation to Philip, —a keen insight, which might be owing to the philosophical habit of her mind, or to something else,—but which issued in information about him, which it was surprising that she could obtain. She seldom spoke of him; but when she did, it was wonderfully to the purpose. Margaret thought she could learn from Maria, in a very simple and natural way, that which she so much wished to know: and when she left the room after dinner, it was to write the note which might bring certainty.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I saw Dr. Levitt this morning while I was out, and he told me, with all possible

assurance, that Mr. Enderby is going to be married very shortly to a young lady at Rome,—Miss Mary Bruce. Now, this is true or it is not. If true, you are as well aware as we are that we are entitled to have known it otherwise and earlier than by common report. If not true, the rumour should not be allowed to spread. If you know anything certainly, one way or the other, pray tell us.

"Yours affectionately,

"MARGARET IBBOTSON."

The "we" and "us" were not quite honest; but Margaret meant to make them as nearly so as possible by *ex-post-facto* communication with her brother and sister: a resolution so easily made, that it did not occur to her how difficult it might be to execute. While her messenger was gone, she wrought herself up to a resolution to bear the answer, whatever it might be, with the same quietness with which she must bear the whole of her future life, if Dr. Levitt's news should prove to be founded in fact. The door opening seemed to prick the nerves of her ears; her heart heaved to her throat at the sight of the white paper: yet it was with neatness that she broke the seal, and with a steady hand that she held the note to read it. The hand-writing was only too distinct: it seemed to burn itself in upon her brain. All was over.

"DEAR MARGARET,—I do not know where Dr. Levitt got his news; but I believe it is true. Mrs. Rowland pretends to absolute certainty about her brother's engagement to Miss Bruce; and it is from this that others speak so positively about it. Whatever are the grounds that Mrs. R. goes upon, there are others which afford a strong presumption that she is right. Some of these may be known to you. They leave no doubt in my mind that the report is true. As to the failure of confidence in his friends,—what can be said?—unless by way of reminder of the old truth that, by the blessing of Heaven, wrongs,—be they but deep enough,—may chasten a human temper into something divine.

"George has been very grave for the last three hours, pondering, I fancy, what irony can be for. Your sister will not grudge him his lesson, though afforded at her expense.

"Yours affectionately,

"MARIA YOUNG."

"Wrongs!" thought she; "Maria goes too far when she speaks of wrongs. There was nothing in my note to bring such an expression in answer. It is going too far."

This was but the irritability of a racked soul, needing to spend its agony somewhere. The remembrance of the conversation with Maria, held

so lately, and of Maria's views of Philip's relation to her, returned upon her, and her soul melted within her. She felt that Maria had understood her better than she did herself, and was justified in the words she had used. Under severe calamity, to be endured alone, evil thoughts sometimes come before good ones. Margaret was, for an hour or two, possessed with the bad spirit of defiance. Her mind sank back into what it had been in her childhood, when she had hidden herself in the lumber-room, or behind the water-tub, for many hours, to make the family uneasy, because she had been punished,—in the days when she bore every infliction that her father dared to try, with apparent unconcern, rather than show to watchful eyes that she was moved,—in the days when the slightest concession would dissolve her stubbornness in an instant, but when, to get rid of a life of contradiction, she had had serious thoughts of cutting her throat, had gone to the kitchen door to get the carving-knife, and had been much disappointed to find the servants at dinner, and the knife-tray out of reach. This spirit, so long ago driven out by the genial influences of family love, by the religion of an expanding intellect, and the solace of appreciation, now came back to inhabit the purified bosom which had been kept carefully swept and garnished. It was the motion of this spirit, uneasy in its unfit abode, that showed itself by

the shiver, the flushed cheek, the clenching hand, and the flashing eye. It kept whispering wicked things,—"I will baffle and deceive Maria: she shall withdraw her pity, and laugh at it with me." "I defy Edward and Hester: they shall wonder how it is that my fancy alone is free, that my heart alone is untouched, that the storms of life pass high over my head, and dared not lower." "I will humble Philip, and convince him . . . ." but no, it would not do. The abode was too lowly and too pure for the evil spirit of defiance: the demon did not wait to be cast out; but as Margaret sank down in her chamber, alone with her lot, to face it as she might, the strange inmate escaped, and left her at least herself.

Margaret was in agonized amazement at the newness of the misery she was suffering. She really fancied she had sympathised with Hester, that dreadful night of Hope's accident: she had then actually believed that she was entering into her sister's feelings. It had been as much like it as seeing a picture of one on the rack is like being racked. But Hester had not had so much cause for misery, for she never had to believe Edward unworthy. Her pride had been wounded at finding that her peace was no longer in her own power; but she had not been trifled with—duped. Here again Margaret refused to believe. The fault was all her own. She had been full of herself, full of

vanity; fancying, without cause, that she was much to another when she was little. She was humbled now, and she no doubt deserved it. But how ineffably weak and mean did she appear in her own eyes! It was this which clouded Heaven to her at the moment that earth had become a desert. She felt so debased, that she durst not ask for strength where she was wont to find it. If she had done one single wrong thing, she thought she could bear the consequences cheerfully, and seek support, and vigorously set about repairing the causes of her fault; but here it seemed to her that her whole state of mind had been low and selfish. It must be this sort of blindness which had led her so far in so fearful a delusion. And if the whole condition of her mind had been low and selfish, while her conscience had given her no hint of anything being amiss, where was she to begin to rectify her being? She felt wholly degraded.

And then what a set of pictures rose up before her excited fancy! Philip going forth for a walk with her and Hester, after having just sealed a letter to Miss Bruce, carrying the consciousness of what he had been saying to the mistress of his heart, while she, Margaret, had supposed herself the chief object of his thought and care! Again, Philip discussing her mind and character with Miss Bruce, as those of a friend for whom he had a regard! or bestowing a passing imagination on

how she would receive the intelligence of his engagement! Perhaps he reserved the news till he could come down to Deerbrook, and call and tell her himself, as one whose friendship deserved that he should be the bearer of his own tidings. That footstep, whose spring she had strangely considered her own signal of joy, was not hers but another's. That laugh, the recollection of which made her smile even in these dreadful moments, was to echo in another's home. She was stripped of all her heart's treasure, of his tones, his ways, his thoughts, —a treasure which she had lived upon without knowing it; she was stripped of it all—cast out—left alone—and he and all others would go on their ways, unaware that anything had happened! Let them do so. It was hard to bear up in solitude, when self-respect was gone with all the rest; but it must be possible to live on—no matter how—if to live on was appointed. If not, there was death, which was better.

These thoughts were not beneath one like Margaret,—one who was religious as she. It requires time for religion to avail anything when self-respect is utterly broken down. A devout sufferer may surmount the pangs of persecution at the first onset, and wrestle with bodily pain, and calmly endure bereavement by death; but there is no power of faith by which a woman can attain resignation under the agony of unrequited passion otherwise than by conflict, long and terrible.

Margaret lay down at last, because her eyes were weary of seeing; and she would fain have shut out all sounds. The occasional flicker of a tiny blaze, however, and the fall of a cinder in the hearth, served to lull her senses, and it was not long before she slept. But oh, the horrors of that sleep! The lines of Maria's note stared her in the face—glaring, growing, gigantic. Sometimes she was trying to read them, and could not, though her life depended on them. Now Mrs. Rowland had got hold of them; and now they were thrown into the flames, but would not burn, and the letters grew red hot. Then came the image of Philip; and that horror was mixed up with whatever was most ludicrous. Once she was struggling for voice to speak to him, and he mocked her useless efforts. O, how she struggled! till some strong arm raised her, and some other voice murmured gently in her throbbing ear,

"Wake, my dear! Wake up, Margaret! What is it, dear? Wake!"

"Mother! is it you? O, mother! have you come at last?" murmured Margaret, sinking her head on Morris's shoulder.

It was some moments before Margaret felt a warm tear fall upon her cheek, and heard Morris say,

"No, my dear: not yet. Your mother is in a better place than this, where we shall all rest with her at last, Miss Margaret."

"What is all this?" said Margaret, raising herself, and looking round her. "What did I mean about my mother? O, Morris! my head is all confused, and I think I have been frightened. They were laughing at me, and when somebody came to help me, I thought it must be my mother. O, Morris, it is a long while —— I wish I was with her."

Morris did not desire to hear what Margaret's dream had been. The immediate cause of Margaret's distress she did not know; but she had for some time suspected that which only one person in the world was aware of besides herself. The terrible secret of this household was no secret to her. She was experienced enough in love and its signs to know, without being told, where love was absent, and where it rested. She had not doubted, up to the return from the wedding trip, that all was right; but she had never been quite happy since. She had perceived no sign that either sister was aware of the truth; the continuance of their sisterly friendship was a proof that neither of them was: but she wished to avoid hearing the particulars of Margaret's dream, and all revelations which, in the weakness and confusion of an hour like this, she might be tempted to make. Morris withdrew from Margaret's clasp, moved softly across the room, gently put the red embers together in the grate, and lighted the lamp which stood on the table.

"I hope," whispered Margaret, trying to still her shivering, "that nobody heard me but you. How came you to think of coming to me?"

"My room being over this, you know, it was easy to hear the voice of a person in an uneasy sleep. I am glad I happened to be awake: so I put on my cloak and came."

Morris did not say that Edward had heard the stifled cry also, and that she had met him on the stairs coming to beg that she would see what could be done. Hester having slept through it, Margaret need never know that other ears than Morris's had heard her. Thus had Hope and Morris tacitly agreed.

"Now, my dear, when I have warmed this flannel, to put about your feet, you must go to sleep again. I will not leave you till day-light,—till the house is near being astir: so you may sleep without being afraid of bad dreams. I will rouse you if I see you disturbed. Now, no more talking, or we shall have the house up; and all this had better be between you and me."

To satisfy Margaret, Morris lay down on the outside of the bed, warmly covered; and the nurse once more, as in old days, felt her favourite child breathing quietly against her shoulder: once more she wiped away the standing tears, and prayed in her heart for the object of her care. If her prayer had had words, it would have been this:—

"Thou hast been pleased to take to thyself the parents of these dear children; and surely thou wilt be therefore pleased to be to them as father and mother, or to raise up or spare to them such as may be so. This is what I would ask for myself, that I may be that comfort to them. Thou knowest that a strange trouble hath entered this house,—thou knowest, for thine eye seeth beneath the face into the heart, as the sun shines into a locked chamber at noon. Thou knowest what these young creatures know not. Make holy to them what thou knowest. Let thy silence rest upon that which must not be spoken. Let thy strength be supplied where temptation is hardest. Let the innocence which has come forth from thine own hand be kept fit to appear in all the light of thy countenance. O! let them never be seen sinking with shame before thee. Father, if thou hast made thy children to love one another for their good, let not love be a grief and a snare to such as these. Thou canst turn the hearts even of the wicked: turn the hearts of these thy dutiful children to love, where love may be all honour and no shame, so that they may have no more mysteries from each other, as I am sure they have none from thee. All who know them have doubtless asked thy blessing on their house, their health, their basket and store. Let me ask it also on the workings of their hearts, since, if their hearts be

right, all is well,—or will be in thine own best time."

When Margaret entered the breakfast-room in the morning, she found her brother sketching the skaters of Deerbrook, while the tea was brewing. Hester was looking over his shoulder, laughing, as she recognised one after another of her neighbours in the act of skating—this one by the stoop—that by the formality—and the other by the coat-flaps flying out behind. No inquiries were made—not a word was said of health or spirits. It seems strange that sufferers have not yet found means to stop the practice of such inquiries—a practice begun in kindness, and carried on in the spirit of hospitality, but productive of great annoyance to all but those who do not need such inquiries—the healthful and the happy. There are multitudes of invalids who can give no comfortable answer respecting their health, and who are averse from giving an uncomfortable one, and for whom nothing is therefore left but evasion. There are only too many sufferers to whom it is irksome to be questioned about their hours of sleeplessness, or who do not choose to have it known that they have not slept. The unpleasant old custom of pressing people to eat has gone out; the sooner the other observance of hospitality is allowed to follow it, the better. All who like to tell of illness and sleeplessness can do so; and those who have

reasons for reserve upon such points, as Margaret had this morning, can keep their own counsel.

At the earliest possible hour that the etiquette of Deerbrook would allow, there was a knock at the door.

"That must be Mrs. Rowland," exclaimed Hester. "One may know that woman's temper by her knock—so consequential, and yet so sharp. Margaret, love, you can run up-stairs—there is time yet—if you do not wish to see her."

"Why should I?" said Margaret, looking up with a calmness which perplexed Hester.

"This is either ignorance," thought she, "or such patience—as I wish I had."

It *was* Mrs. Rowland, and she *was* come to tell what Hester feared Margaret might not be able to bear to hear. She was attended only by the little fellow who was so fond of riding on uncle Philip's shoulder. It was rather lucky that Ned came, as Margaret was furnished with something to do in taking off his worsted gloves, and rubbing his little red hands between her own. And then she could say a great many things to him about learning to slide, and the difficulty of keeping on the snow-man's nose, and about her wonder that they had not thought of putting a pipe into his mouth. Before this subject was finished, Mrs. Rowland turned full round to Margaret, and said that the purpose of her visit was to explain fully something

that her poor mother had let drop yesterday to Mr. Hope. Her mother was not what she had been—though, indeed, she had always been rather apt to let out things that she should not. She found that Mr. Hope had been informed by her mother of her brother Philip's engagement to a charming young lady, who would indeed be a great ornament to the connexion.

"I assure you," said Margaret, "my brother is very careful, and always remembers that he is upon honour as to what he hears in a sick-room. He has not mentioned it."

"O! then, it is safe. We are much obliged to Mr. Hope, I am sure. I said to my mother—'My dear ma'am,' . . ."

"But I must mention," said Margaret, "that the news was abroad before . . . . I must beg that you will not suppose my brother has spoken of it, if you should find that everybody knows it. I heard it from Dr. Levitt yesterday, about the same time, I fancy, that Mr. Hope was hearing it from Mrs. Enderby."

Hester sat perfectly still, to avoid all danger of showing that this was news to her.

"How very strange!" exclaimed the lady. "I often say there is no keeping anything quiet in Deerbrook. Do you know where Dr. Levitt got his information?"

"No," said Margaret, smiling. "Dr. Levitt

generally knows what he is talking about. I dare say he had it from some good authority. The young lady is at Rome, I find."

"Are you acquainted with Miss Bruce?" asked Hester, thinking it time to relieve Margaret of her share of the conversation.

Margaret started a little on finding that her sister had heard the news. Was it possible that her brother and sister had been afraid to tell her? No: it was a piece of Edward's professional discretion. His wife alone had a right to the news he heard among his patients.

"O yes!" replied Mrs. Rowland; "I have long loved Mary as a sister. Their early attachment made a sister of her to me an age ago."

"It has been a long engagement, then," said Hester, glad to say anything which might occupy Mrs. Rowland, as Margaret's lips were now turning very white.

"Not now, my dear," Margaret was heard to say to little Ned, over whom she was bending her head as he stood by her side. "Stand still here," she continued, with wonderful cheerfulness of tone; "I want to hear your mama tell us about uncle Philip." With the effort her strength rallied, and the paleness was gone before Mrs. Rowland had turned round.

"How long the engagement has existed," said the lady, "I cannot venture to say. I speak only of

the attachment. Young people understand their own affairs, you know, and have their little mysteries, and laugh behind our backs, I dare say, at our ignorance of what they are about. Philip has been sly enough as to this, I own: but I must say I had my suspicions. I was pretty confident of his being engaged from the day that he told me, in the summer, that he fully agreed with me that it was time he was settled."

"How differently some people understood that!" thought Hester and Margaret at the same moment.

"Is Mr. Enderby at Rome now?" asked Hester.

"No: he is hard at work, studying law. He is really going to apply to a profession now. Not that it would be necessary, for Mary has a very good fortune. But Mary wishes so much that he should—like a sensible girl as she is."

"It is what I urged when he consulted me," thought Margaret. She had had little idea whose counsel she was following up.

"We shall soon hear of his setting off for the Continent, however, I have no doubt," said the lady.

"To bring home his bride," observed Margaret, calmly.

"Why, I do not know that. The Bruces will be returning early in the spring; and I should like the young people to marry in town, that we may have them here for their wedding trip."

"How you do hug me!" cried the laughing little boy, around whom Margaret's arm was passed.

"Have I made you warm at last?" asked Margaret. "If not, you may go and stand by the fire."

"No, indeed; we must be going," said mama. "As I find this news is abroad, I must call on Mrs. Grey. She will take offence at once, if she hears it from anybody but me. So much for people's husbands being partners in business!"

Margaret was now fully qualified to comprehend her sister's irritability. Every trifle annoyed her. The rustle of Mrs. Rowland's handsome cloak almost made her sick; and she thought the hall clock would never have done striking twelve. When conscious of this, she put a strong check upon herself.

Hester stood by the mantel-piece, looking into the fire, and taking no notice of their mutual silence upon this piece of news. At last she muttered, in a soliloquizing tone,

"I do not know—but I am not sure this news is true, after all."

After a moment's pause, Margaret replied,

"I think that is not very reasonable. What must one suppose of everybody else, if it is not true?"

Hester was going to say, "What must we think of him if it is?" but she checked herself. She should not have said what she had; she felt this, and only replied,

"Just so. Yes, it must be true."

Margaret's heart once more sank within her at this corroboration of her own remark.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEADOWS IN WINTER.

HESTER was tired of her snow-boots before she saw them. She had spent more trouble on them than they were worth; and it was three weeks yet before they came. It was now past the middle of February—rather late in the season for snow-boots to arrive: but then there was Margaret's consolatory idea, that they would be ready for next year's snow.

"It is not too late yet," said Mr. Hope. "There is skating every day in the meadow. It will soon be over; so do not lose your opportunity. Come! let us go to-day."

"Not unless the sun shines out," said Hester, looking with a shiver up at the windows.

"Yes, to-day," said Edward, "because I have time to-day to go with you. You have seen me quiz other skaters; you must go and see other skaters quiz me."

"What points of your skating do they get hold of to quiz?" asked Margaret.

"Why, I hardly know. We shall see."

"Is it so very good, then?"

"No. I believe the worst of my skating is, that it is totally devoid of every sort of expression. That is just the true account of it," he continued, as his wife laughed. "I do not square my elbows, nor set my coat flying, nor stoop, nor rear; but neither is there any grace. I just go straight on; and, as far as I know, nobody ever bids any other body look at me."

"So you bid your own family come and look at you. But how are your neighbours to quiz you if they do not observe you?"

"O, that was only a bit of antithesis for effect. My last account is the true one, as you will see. I shall come in for you at twelve."

By twelve the sun had shone out, and the ladies, booted, furred, and veiled, were ready to encounter the risks and rigours of the ice and snow. As they opened the hall door, they met on the steps a young woman, who was just raising her hand to the knocker. Her errand was soon told.

"Please, ma'am, I heard that you wanted a servant."

"That is true," said Hester. "Where do you come from?—from any place near, so that you can call again?"

"Surely," said Margaret, "it is Mrs. Enderby's Susan."

"Yes, miss, I have been living with Mrs. Enderby. Mrs. Enderby will give me a good character, ma'am."

"Why are you leaving her, Susan?"

"O, ma'am, only because she is gone."

"Gone!—where?—what do you mean?"

"Gone to live at Mrs. Rowland's, ma'am. You didn't know?—it *was* very sudden. But she was moved yesterday, ma'am, and we were paid off—except Phœbe, who stays to wait upon her. I am left in charge of the house, ma'am; so I can step here again, if you wish it, some time when you are not going out."

"Do so; any time this evening, or before noon to-morrow."

"Did you know of this, Edward?" said his wife, as they turned the corner.

"Not I."

"I think Mrs. Rowland is mistaken in saying that nothing can be kept secret in Deerbrook. I do not believe any body has dreamed of the poor old lady giving up her house."

"Very likely Mrs. Rowland never dreamed of it herself, till the day it was done," observed Margaret.

"O yes, she did," said Mr. Hope. "I understand now the old lady's agitation, and the expressions she dropped about 'last times' nearly a month ago."

"By the bye, that was the last time you saw her—was it not?"

"Yes; the next day when I called I was told that she was better, and that she would send when she wished to see me again, to save me the trouble of calling when she might be asleep."

"She has been asleep or engaged every time I have inquired at the door of late," observed Margaret. "I hope she is doing nothing but what she likes in this change of plan."

"I believe she finds most peace and quiet in doing what her daughter likes," said Mr. Hope. "Here, Margaret, where are you going? This is the gate. I believe you have not learned your way about yet."

"I will follow you immediately," said Margaret, "I will only go a few steps to see if this can really be true."

Before the Hopes had half crossed the meadow, Margaret joined them, perfectly convinced. The large bills in the closed windows of Mrs. Enderby's house bore 'To be Let or Sold' too plainly to leave any doubt.

As the skating season was nearly over; all the skaters in Deerbrook were eager to make use of their remaining opportunities, and the banks of the brook and of the river were full of their wives, sisters, and children. Sydney Grey was busy cutting figures of eight before the eyes of his sisters,

and in defiance of his mother's careful warnings not to go here, and not to venture there, and not to attempt to cross the river. Mr. Hope begged his wife to engage Mrs. Grey in conversation, so that Sydney might be left free for a while, and promised to keep near the boy for half an hour, during which time Mrs. Grey might amuse herself with watching other and better performers further on. As might have been foreseen, however, Mrs. Grey could talk of nothing but Mrs. Enderby's removal, of which she had not been informed till this morning, and which she had intended to discuss in Hester's house, on leaving the meadows.

It appeared that Mrs. Enderby had been in agitated and variable spirits for some time, apparently wishing to say something that she did not say, and expressing a stronger regard than ever for her old friends,—a regular sign that some act of tyranny or rudeness might speedily be expected from Mrs. Rowland. The Greys were in the midst of their speculations as to what might be coming to pass, when Sydney burst in, with the news that Mrs. Enderby's house was to be 'Let or Sold.' Mrs. Grey had mounted her spectacles first, to verify the fact, had then sent Alice over to inquire, and had immediately put on her bonnet and cloak, and called on her old friend at Mrs. Rowland's. She had been told at the door that Mrs. Enderby was too much fatigued with her removal to see any

visitors. "So I shall try again to-morrow," concluded Mrs. Grey.

"How does Mr. Hope think her spasms have been lately?" asked Sophia.

"He has not seen her for nearly a month; so I suppose they are better."

"I fear that does not follow, my dear," said Mrs. Grey, winking. "Some people are afraid of your husband's politics, you are aware; and I know Mrs. Rowland has been saying and doing things on that score which you had better not hear about. I have my reasons for thinking that the old lady's spasms are far from being better. But Mrs. Rowland has been so busy crying up those drops of hers that cure everything, and praising her maid, that I have a great idea your husband will not be admitted to see her till she is past cure, and her daughter thoroughly frightened. Mr. Hope has never been forgiven, you know, for marrying into our connexion so decidedly. And I really don't know what would have been the consequence, if, as we once fancied likely, Mr. Philip and Margaret had thought of each other."

Margaret was happily out of hearing. A fresh blow had just been struck. She had looked to Mrs. Enderby for information on the subject which for ever occupied her, and on which she felt that she must know more or sink. She had been much disappointed at being refused admission to the old

lady, time after time. Now all hope of free access and private conversation was over. She had set it as an object before her to see Mrs. Enderby; and learn as much of Philip's affair as his mother chose to offer; now this object was lost, and nothing remained to be done or hoped,—for it was too certain that Mrs. Enderby's friends would not be allowed unrestrained intercourse with her in her daughter's house.

For some little time Margaret had been practising the device, so familiar to the unhappy, of carrying off mental agitation by bodily exertion. She was now eager to be doing something more active than walking by Mrs. Grey's side, listening to ideas which she knew just as well without their being spoken. Mrs. Grey's thoughts about Mrs. Rowland, and Mrs. Rowland's ideas of Mrs. Grey, might always be anticipated by those who knew the ladies. Hester and Margaret had learned to think of something else, while this sort of comment was proceeding, and to resume their attention when it came to an end. Margaret had withdrawn from it now, and was upon the ice with Sydney.

"Why, cousin Margaret, you don't mean that you are afraid of walking on the ice!" cried Sydney, balancing himself on his heels. "Mr. Hope, what do you think of that?" he called out, as Hope skimmed past them. "Cousin Margaret is afraid of going on the ice!"

"What does she think can happen to her?" asked Mr. Hope, his last words vanishing in the distance.

"It looks so grey, and clear, and dark, Sydney."

"Pooh! It is thick enough between you and the water. You would have to get down a good way, I can tell you, before you could get drowned."

"But it is so slippery!"

"What of that? What else did you expect with ice? If you tumble, you can get up again. I have been down three times this morning."

"Well, that is a great consolation, certainly. Which way do you want me to walk?"

"O, any way. Across the river to the other bank, if you like. You will remember next summer, when we come this way in a boat, that you have walked across the very place."

"That is true," said Margaret. "I will go if Sophia will go with me."

"There is no use in asking any of them," said Sydney. "They stand dawdling and looking, till their lips and noses are all blue and red, and they are never up to any fun."

"I will try as far as that pole first," said Margaret. "I should not care if they had not swept away all the snow here, so as to make the ice look so grey and slippery."

"That pole!" said Sydney. "Why, that pole is put up on purpose to show that you must not go

there. Don't you see how the ice is broken all round it? O, I know how it is that you are so stupid and cowardly to-day. You've lived in Birmingham all your winters, and you've never been used to walk on the ice."

"I am glad you have found that out at last. Now, look—I am really going. What a horrid sensation!" she cried, as she cautiously put down one foot before the other on the transparent floor. She did better when she reached the middle of the river, where the ice had been ground by the skates.

"Now, you would get on beautifully," said Sydney, "if you would not look at your feet. Why can't you look at the people, and the trees opposite?"

"Suppose I should step into a hole."

"There are no holes. Trust me for the holes. —What do you flinch so for? The ice always cracks so, in one part or another. I thought you had been shot."

"So did I," said she, laughing. "But, Sydney, we are a long way from both banks."

"To be sure: that is what we came for."

Margaret looked somewhat timidly about her. An indistinct idea flitted through her mind,—how glad she should be to be accidentally, innocently drowned; and, scarcely recognizing it, she proceeded.

"You get on well," shouted Mr. Hope, as he flew past, on his return up the river.

"There, now," said Sydney, presently; "it is a very little way to the bank. I will just take a trip up and down, and come for you again, to go back; and then we will try whether we can't get cousin Hester over, when she sees you have been safe there and back."

This was a sight which Hester was not destined to behold. Margaret had an ignorant partiality for the ice which was the least grey; and, when left to herself, she made for a part which looked less like glass. Nobody particularly heeded her. She slipped, and recovered herself: she slipped again, and fell, hearing the ice crack under her. Every time she attempted to rise, she found the place too slippery to keep her feet; next, there was a hole under her; she felt the cold water,—she was sinking through; she caught at the surrounding edges,—they broke away. There was a cry from the bank, just as the death-cold waters seemed to close all round her, and she felt the ice like a heavy weight above her. One thought of joy,—"it will soon be all over now,"—was the only experience she was conscious of.

In two minutes more, she was breathing the air again, sitting on the bank, and helping to wring out her clothes. How much may pass in two minutes! Mr. Hope was coming up the river

again, when he saw a bustle on the bank, and slipped off his skates, to be ready to be of service. He ran as others ran, and arrived just when a dark-blue dress was emerging from the water, and then a dripping fur tippet, and then the bonnet, making the gradual revelation to him who it was. For one instant he covered his face with his hands, half-hiding an expression of agony so intense that a bystander who saw it said, "Take comfort, sir; she has been in but a very short time. She'll recover, I don't doubt." Hope leaped to the bank, and received her from the arms of the men who had drawn her out. The first thing she remembered was hearing, in the lowest tone she could conceive of,—"O, God! my Margaret!" and a groan, which she felt rather than heard. Then there were many warm and busy hands about her head,—removing her bonnet, shaking out her hair, and chafing her temples. She sighed out, "O dear!" and she heard that soft groan again. In another moment she roused herself, sat up, saw Hope's convulsed countenance, and Sydney standing motionless and deadly pale.

"I shall never forgive myself," she heard her brother exclaim.

"O, I am very well," said she, remembering all about it. "The air feels quite warm. Give me my bonnet. I can walk home."

"Can you? The sooner the better, then," said Hope, raising her.

She could stand very well, but the water was everywhere dripping from her clothes. Many by-standers employed themselves in wringing them out; and in the meanwhile Margaret inquired for her sister, and hoped she did not know of the accident. Hester did not know of it, for Margaret happened to be the first to think of any one but herself.

Sydney was flying off to report, when he was stopped and recalled.

"You must go to her, Edward," said Margaret, "or she will be frightened. You can do me no good. Sydney will go home with me, or any one here, I am sure." Twenty people stepped forward at the word. Margaret parted with her heavy fur tippet, accepted a long cloth cloak from a poor woman, to throw over her wet clothes, selected Mr. Jones, the butcher, for her escort, sent Sydney forward with directions to Morris to warm her bed, and then she set forth homeward. Mr. Hope and half a dozen more would see her across the ice; and by the time she had reached the other bank, she was able to walk very much as if nothing had happened.

Mr. Hope had perfectly recovered his composure before he reached the somewhat distant pond where Hester and the Greys were watching sliding as

good as could be seen within twenty miles. It had reached perfection, like everything else in Deerbrook.

"What! tired already?" said Hester to her husband. "What have you done with your skates?"

"O I have left them somewhere there, I suppose." He drew her arm within his own. "Come, my dear, let us go home. Margaret is gone."

"Gone! Why? Is not she well? It is not so very cold."

"She has got wet, and she has gone home to warm herself."

Hester did not wait to speak again to the Greys when she comprehended that her sister had been in the river. Her husband was obliged to forbid her walking so fast, and assured her all the way that there was nothing to fear. Hester reproached him for his coolness.

"You need not reproach me," said he. "I shall never cease to reproach myself for letting her go where she did." And yet his heart told him that he had only acted according to his deliberate design of keeping aloof from all Margaret's pursuits and amusements that were not shared with her sister. And as for the risk, he had seen fifty people walking across the ice this very morning. Judging by the event, however, he very sincerely declared that he should never forgive himself for having left her.

When they reached home, Margaret was quite warm and comfortable, and her hair drying rapidly under Morris's hands. Hester was convinced that everybody might dine as usual. Margaret herself came down-stairs to tea; and the only consequence of the accident seemed to be, that Charles was kept very busy opening the door to inquirers how Miss Ibbotson was this evening.

It made Hope uneasy to perceive how much Margaret remembered of what had passed around her in the midst of the bustle of the morning. If she was still aware of some circumstances that she mentioned, might she not retain others,—the words extorted from him, the frantic action which he now blushed to remember?

"Brother," said she, "what *was* the meaning of something that I heard some one say, just as I sat up on the bank? 'There's a baulk for the doctor! He is baulked of a body in his own house.'"

"O, Margaret," cried her sister, who sat looking at her all the evening as if they had been parted for ten years, "you dreamed that. It was a fancy. Think what a state your poor head was in! It may have a few strange imaginations left in it still. May it not, Edward?"

"This is not one," he replied. "She heard very accurately."

"What did the mean?"

"There is a report abroad about me, arising out of the old prejudice about dissection. Some of my neighbours think that dissecting is the employment and the passion of my life, and that I rob the church-yard as often as anybody is buried."

"O, Edward! how frightful! how ridiculous!"

"It is very disagreeable, my dear, I am taunted with this wherever I go."

"What is to be done?"

"We must wait till the prejudices against me die out: but I see that we shall have to wait some time; for before one suspicion is given up, another arises."

"Since that unhappy election," said Hester, sighing. "What a strange thing it is that men like you should be no better treated! Here is Mrs. Enderby taken out of your hands, and your neighbours suspecting and slandering you, whose commonest words they are not worthy to repeat."

"My dear Hester!" said he, in a tone of serious remonstrance.

"That is rather a wife-like way of putting the case, to be sure," said Margaret, smiling: "but, in as far as it is true, the matter surely ceases to be strange. Good men do not come into the world to be what the world calls fortunate, but to be something far better. The best men do not use the means to be rich, to be praised by their neighbours, to be out of the way of trouble; and if they will

not use the means, it does not become them—nor their wives—to be discouraged at losing their occupation, or being slandered, or suspected as dangerous people."

Edward's smile thanked her, and so did her sister's kiss. But Hester looked grave again when she said—

"I suppose we shall know, sooner or later, why it is that good people are not to be happy here—and that the more they love one another, the more struggles and sorrows they have to undergo."

"Do we not know something of it already?" said Hope, after a pretty long pause. "Is it not to put us off from the too vehement desire of being what we commonly call happy? By the time higher things become more interesting to us than this, we begin to find that it is given to us to put our own happiness under our feet, in reaching forward to something better. We become, by natural consequence, practised in this (forgetful of the things that are behind); and if the practice be painful, what then? We shall not quarrel with it, surely, unless we are willing to exchange what we have gained for money, and praise, and animal spirits, shutting in an abject mind."

"O! no, no," said Hester; "but yet there are troubles . . . ." She stopped short on observing Margaret's quivering lip.

"There are troubles, I own, which it is difficult

to classify and interpret," said her husband. "We can only struggle through them, taking the closest heed to our innocence. But these affairs of ours—these mistakes of my neighbours—are not of that sort. They are intelligible enough, and need not therefore trouble us much."

Hope was right in his suspicion of the accuracy of Margaret's memory. His tones, his words, had sunk deep into her heart—her innocent heart—in which everything that entered it became safe and pure as itself. 'O God! my Margaret!' sounded there like music.

"What a heart he has!" she thought. "I was very selfish to fancy him reserved; and I am glad to know that my brother loves me so. If it is such a blessing to be his sister, how happy must Hester be—in spite of everything! God has preserved my life, and He has given these two to each other! And oh! how he has shown me that they love me! I will rouse myself, and try to suffer less."

CHAPTER VII.

MOODS OF THE MIND.

HESTER'S sleeping as well as waking thoughts were this night full of solicitude as to her feelings and conduct towards her sister. A thousand times before the morning she had said to herself, in dreams and in meditation, that she had failed in this relation,—the oldest, and, till of late, the dearest. She shuddered to think how nearly she had lost Margaret; and to imagine what her state of mind would have been, if her sister had now been beyond the reach of the voice, the eye, the hand, which she was resolved should henceforth dispense to her nothing but the love and the benefits she deserved. She reflected that to few was granted such a warning of the death of beloved ones: to few was it permitted to feel, while it was yet not too late, the agony of remorse for pain inflicted, for gratifications withheld; for selfish neglect, for insufficient love. She remembered vividly what her emotions had been as a child, on finding her canary dead in its cage;—

how she had wept all day, not so much for its loss as from the recollection of the many times when she had failed to cheer it with sugar, and groundsel, and play, and of the number of hours when she had needlessly covered up its cage in impatience at its song, shutting out its sunshine, and changing the brightest seasons of its little life into dull night. If it had been thus with her sister! Many a hasty word, many an unjust thought, came back now to wring her heart, when she imagined Margaret sinking in the water,—the soft breathing on which our life so marvellously hangs, stopped without struggle or cry. How near,—how very near, had Death, in his hovering, stooped towards their home! How strange, while treading thus precariously the film which covers the abyss into which all must some day drop, and which may crack under the feet of any one at any hour,—how strange to be engrossed with petty jealousies, with selfish cares, and to be unmindful of the great interests of existence, the exercises of mutual love and trust! Thank God! it was not too late. Margaret lived to be cherished, to be consoled for her private griefs, as far as consolation might be possible; to have her innocent affections redeemed from the waste to which they now seemed doomed,—gathered gradually up again, and knit into the interests of the home life in which she was externally bearing her part. Full of these thoughts,

and forgetting how often her best feelings had melted away beneath the transient heats kindled by the little provocations of daily life, Hester now believed that Margaret would never have to suffer from her more,—that their love would be henceforth like that of angels,—like that which it would have been if Margaret had really died yesterday. It was yet early, when, in the full enjoyment of these undoubting thoughts, Hester stood by her sister's bed-side.

Margaret was still sleeping, but with that expression of weariness in her face which had of late become too common. Hester gazed long at the countenance, grieving at the languor and anxiety which it revealed. She had not taken Margaret's suffering to heart,—she had been unfeeling,—strangely forgetful. She would minister to her now with reverent care. As she thus resolved, she bent down, and kissed her forehead. Margaret started, shook off sleep, felt quite well, would rise;—there was no reason why she should not rise at once.

When she entered the breakfast-room, Hester was there, placing her chair by the fire, and inventing indulgences for her, as if she had been an invalid. It was in vain that Margaret protested that no effects of the accident remained,—not a single sensation of chill: she was to be taken care of, and she submitted. She was touched by

her sister's gentle offices, and felt more like being free and at peace, more like being lifted up out of her woe, than she had yet done since the fatal hour which rendered her conscious and wretched. Breakfast went on cheerfully. The fire blazed bright: the rain pelting against the windows gave welcome promise of exemption from inquiries in person, and from having to relate, many times over, the particulars of the event of yesterday. Hester was beautiful in all the glow of her sensibilities, and Edward was for this morning in no hurry. No blue or yellow-backed pamphlet lay beside his plate; and when his last cup was empty, he still sat talking as if he forgot that he should have to go out in the rain. In the midst of a laugh which had prevented their hearing a premonitory knock, the door opened, and Mrs. Grey's twin daughters entered, looking half-shy, half-eager. Never before had they been known to come out in heavy rain: but they were so very desirous to see cousin Margaret after she had been in the water!—and Sydney had held the great gig-umbrella over himself and them, as papa would not hear of Sydney not coming:—he was standing outside the door now, under the large umbrella, for he said nothing should make him come in and see cousin Margaret:—he would never see her again if he could help it. Sydney had said another thing,—such a wicked thing! Mama was quite

ashamed of him.—Mr. Hope thought they had better not repeat anything wicked that any one had said: but Hester considered it possible that it might not appear so wicked if spoken as if left to the imagination. What Sydney had said was, that if cousin Margaret had been really drowned, he would have drowned himself before dinner-time. Mary added that she heard him mutter that he was almost ready to do it now.—Mr. Hope thought that must be the reason why he was standing out at present, to catch all this rain, which was very nearly enough to drown anybody; and he went to bring him in. But Sydney was not to be caught. He was on the watch; and the moment he saw Mr. Hope's coat instead of his sisters' cloaks, he ran off with a speed which defied pursuit, and was soon out of sight with the large umbrella.

His cousins were sorry that he felt the event so painfully, and that he could not come in, and confide his trouble of mind to them. Hope resolved not to let the morning pass without seeing him, and, if possible, bringing him home to dinner, with William Levitt to take off the awkwardness.

"What are we to do?" exclaimed Sydney's little sisters. "He has carried off the great umbrella."

"I cannot conveniently send you, just at present," said Hester; "so you had better put off your cloaks, and amuse yourselves here till the

rain abates, or some one comes for you. We will speak to Miss Young to excuse your not being with her."

"O, cousin Margaret," said the children, "if you will speak to Miss Young, she will give us any sort of a holiday. She minds everything you say. She will let us stop all day, and dine here, if you ask her."

Hester said she could not have them stay all day,—she did not mean to have them to dinner: and the little girls both looked up in her face at once, to find out what made her speak so angrily. They saw cousin Margaret glancing the same way too.

"Do you know, Mary," said Fanny, "you have not said a word yet of what Miss Young bade you say?"

Mary told cousin Margaret, that Miss Young was wishing very much to see her, and would be pleased if Margaret would mention what evening she would spend with her,—a nice long evening, Mary added, to begin as soon as it grew dark, and go on till——nobody knew when.

"Maria had better come here," observed Hester, quickly; "and then some one else besides Margaret may have the benefit of her conversation. She seems to forget that anybody cares for her besides Margaret. Tell Miss Young she had better fix an evening to come here."

"I do not think she will do that," said both the little girls.

"Why not?"

"She is very lame now," replied Mary, "and she cannot walk further than just to school and back again."

"And, besides," remarked Fanny, "she wants to talk with cousin Margaret alone, I am sure. They have such a great deal of talk to do whenever they are together! We watch them sometimes in the school-room, through the window, when we are at play in the garden; and their heads nod at one another in this way. I believe they never leave off for a minute. We often wonder what it can be all about."

"Ah, my dears, you and I had better not ask," said Hester. "I have no doubt it is better that we should not know."

Margaret looked beseechingly at her sister. Hester replied to her look,

"I mean what I say, Margaret. You cannot but be aware how much more you have to communicate to Maria than to me. Our conversation soon comes to a stand: and I must say I have had much occasion to admire your great talent for silence of late. Maria has still to learn your accomplishments in that direction, I fancy."

Margaret quietly told the little girls that she would write a note to Maria, with her answer.

"You must not do that," said Fanny. "Miss Young said you must not. That was the reason why she sent you a message instead of a note—that you might not have to write back again, when a message would do as well."

Margaret, nevertheless, sat down at the writing-table.

"You go to-day, of course," said Hester, in the voice of forced calmness which Margaret knew so well. "The little girls may as well stay and dine, after all, as I shall otherwise be alone in the evening."

"I shall not go to-day," said Margaret, without turning her head.

"You will not stay away on my account, of course."

"I have said that I shall go on Thursday."

"Thursday! that is almost a week hence. Now, Margaret, do not be pettish, and deny yourself what you know you like best. Do not be a baby, and quarrel with your supper. I had far rather you should go to-night, and have done with it, than that you should wait till Thursday, thinking all day long till then that you are obliging me by staying with me. I cannot bear that."

"I wish I knew what you could bear," said Margaret, in a voice which the children could not hear. "I wish I knew how I could save you pain."

The moment the words were out, Margaret was sorry for them. She was aware that the best kindness to her sister was to take as little notice as possible of her discontents—to turn the conversation—to avoid scenes, or any remarks which could bring them on. It was hard—sometimes it seemed impossible,—to speak calmly and lightly, while every pulse was throbbing, and every fibre trembling with fear and wretchedness; but yet it was best to assume such calmness and lightness. Margaret now asked the little girls, while she sealed her note, how their patch-work was getting on,—thus far the handsomest patch-work quilt she had ever seen.

"O, it will be far handsomer before it is done. Mrs. Howell has found up some beautiful pieces of print for us,—remnants of her first morning-gown after she was married, and of her poor dear Howell's last dressing-gown, as she says. We were quite sorry to take those; but she would put them up for us: and she is to see the quilt sometimes in return."

"But Miss Nares's parcel was the best, cousin Margaret. Such a quantity of nankeen for the ground, and the loveliest chintz for the centre medallion! Is not it, Mary?"

"O lovely!—Do you know, cousin Margaret, Miss Nares and Miss Flint both cried when they heard how nearly you were drowned! I am sure, I had no idea they would have cared so much."

"Nor I, my dear. But I dare say they feel kindly towards any one saved from great danger."

"Not everybody," said Fanny, "only you, because you are a great favourite. Everybody says you are a great favourite. Papa cried last night,—just a little tear or two, as gentlemen do,—when he told mama how sorry everybody in Deerbrook would have been if you had died."

"There! that will do," said Hester, struggling between her better and worse feelings,—her remorse of this morning, and her present jealousy,—and losing her temper between the two.—"You have said quite enough about what you do not understand, my dears.—I cannot have you make so free with your cousin's name, children."

The little girls looked at each other in wonder; and Hester thought she detected a lurking smile.

"I see what you are thinking, children. Yes, look, the rain is nearly over; and then you may go and tell Mrs. Howell and Miss Nares, and all the people you see on your way home, that they had better attend to their own concerns than pretend to understand what would have been felt if your cousin had been drowned. I wonder at their impertinence."

"Are you in earnest, cousin Hester? Shall we go and tell them so?"

"No; she is not in earnest," said Margaret.

"But before you go, Morris shall give you some pieces for your quilt,—some very pretty ones, such as she knows I can spare."

Margaret rang, and Morris took the children up-stairs, to choose for themselves out of Margaret's drawer of pieces. When the door had closed behind them, Margaret said—

"Sister, do not make me wish that I had died under the ice yesterday."

"Margaret, how dare you say anything so wicked?"

"If it be wicked, God forgive me! I was wretched enough before,—I would fain have never come to life again: and now you almost make me believe that you would have been best pleased if I never had."

At this moment Hope entered. He had left them in a far different mood: it made him breathless to see his wife's face of passion, and Margaret's of woe.

"Hear her!" exclaimed Hester. "She says I should have been glad to have lost her yesterday!"

"Have mercy upon me!" cried Margaret, in excessive agitation. "You oppress me beyond what I can bear. I cannot bear on as I used to do. My strength is gone, and you give me none. You take away what I had."

"Will you hear me spoken to in this way?" cried Hester, turning to her husband.

"I will."

Margaret's emotion prevented her hearing this, or caring who was by. She went on:

"You leave me nothing,—nothing but yourself,—and you abuse my love for you. You warn me against love,—against marriage,—you chill my very soul with terror at it. I have found a friend in Maria; and you poison my comfort in my friendship, and insult my friend. There is not an infant in a neighbour's house but you become jealous of it the moment I take it in my arms. There is not a flower in your garden, not a book on my table, that you will let me love in peace. How ungenerous—while you have one to cherish and who cherishes you, that you will have me lonely!—that you quarrel with all who show regard to me!—that you refuse me the least solace, when my heart is breaking with its loneliness! O, it is cruel!"

"Will you hear this, Edward?"

"I will, because it is the truth. For once, Hester, you must hear another's mind; you have often told your own."

"God knows why I was saved yesterday," murmured Margaret; "for a more desolate creature does not breathe."

Hope leaned against the wall. Hester relieved her torment of mind with reproaches of Margaret.

"You do not trust me," she cried; "it is you

who make me miserable. You go to others for the comfort you ought to seek in me. You place that confidence in others which ought to be mine alone. You are cheered when you learn that the commonest gossips in Deerbrook care about you, and you set no value on your own sister's feelings for you. You have faith and charity for people out of doors, and mistrust and misconstruction for those at home. I am the injured one, Margaret, not you."

"Margaret," said Hope, "your sister speaks for herself. I think that you are the injured one, as Hester herself will soon agree. So far from having anything to reproach you with, I honour your forbearance,—unremitting till this hour,—I mourn that we cannot, if we would, console you in return. But whatever I can do shall be done. Your friendships, your pursuits, shall be protected. If we persecute your affections at home, I will take care that you are allowed their exercise abroad. Rely upon me, and do not think yourself utterly lonely while you have a brother."

"I have been very selfish," said Margaret, recovering herself at the first word of kindness; "wretchedness makes me selfish, I think."

She raised herself up on the sofa, and timidly held out her hand to her sister. Hester thrust it away. Margaret uttered a cry of agony, such as had never been heard from her since her childhood.

Hope fell on the floor—he had fainted at the sound.

Even now there was no one but Morris who understood it. Margaret reproached herself bitterly for her selfishness,—for her loss of the power of self-control. Hester's remorse, however greater in degree, was of its usual kind, strong and brief. She repeated, as she had done before, that she made her husband wretched,—that she should never have another happy moment,—that she wished he had never seen her. For the rest of the day, she was humbled, contrite, convinced that she should give way to her temper no more. Her eyes filled when her husband spoke tenderly to her, and her conduct to Margaret was one act of supplication. But a lesser degree of this same kind of penitence had produced no permanent good effect before; and there was no security that the present paroxysm would have a different result.

Morris had seen that the children were engaged up-stairs when she came down at Margaret's silent summons, to help to revive her master. When she saw that there had been distress before there was illness, she took her part. She resolved that no one but herself should hear his first words, and sent the ladies away when she saw that his consciousness was returning. All the world might have heard his first words. He recovered himself with a vigorous effort, swallowed a glass

of wine, and within a few minutes was examining a patient in the waiting-room. There the little girls saw him as they passed the half-open door, on their way out with their treasure of chintz and print; and having heard some bustle below, they carried home word that they believed Mr. Hope had been doing something to somebody which had made somebody faint; and Sophia, shuddering, observed how horrid it must be to be a surgeon's wife.

CHAPTER VIII.

WARNINGS.

MARIA YOUNG'S lodging at the farrier's had one advantage over many better dwellings;—it was pleasanter in winter than in summer. There was little to find fault with in the tiny sitting-room after candles were lighted. The fire burned clear in the grate; and when the screen was up, there were no draughts. This screen was quite a modern improvement. When Fanny and Mary Grey had experienced the pleasure of surprising Sophia with a token of sisterly affection, in the shape of a piece of india-rubber, and their mother with a token of filial affection, in the form of a cotton-box, they were unwilling to stop, and looked round to see whether they could not present somebody with a token of some other sort of affection. Sophia was taken into their counsels; and she, being aware of how Miss Young's candle flared when the wind was high, devised this screen. The carpenter made the frame; Sydney covered it with canvas and black paper for a ground; and the little girls

pasted on it all the drawings and prints they could muster. Here was the Dargle, an everlasting waterfall, that looked always the same in the sunny-coloured print. There was Morland's Woodcutter, with his tall figure, his pipe, his dog, and his faggot, with the snow lying all around him. Two or three cathedrals were interspersed; and, in the midst of them, and larger than any of them, a silhouette of Mr. Grey, with the eye-lash wonderfully like, and the wart upon his nose not to be mistaken. Then there was Charles the First taking leave of his family; and, on either side of this, an evening primrose in water-colours, by Mary, and a head of Terror, with a square mouth and starting eyes, in crayon, by Fanny. Mrs. Grey produced some gay border which the paperhanger had left over when the attics were last furnished; and Sydney cut out in white paper a huntsman with his whip in the air, a fox, a gate, and two hounds. Mr. Grey pleaded, that having contributed his face, he had done all that could be expected of him: nevertheless, he brought home one day, on his return from market, a beautiful Stream of Time, which made the children dance round their screen. It was settled at first that this would nobly ornament the whole of one side; but it popped into Sydney's head, just as he was falling asleep one night, how pretty it would be to stick it round with the planets. So the planets

were cut out in white, and shaded with Indian ink. There was no mistaking Saturn with his ring, or Jupiter with his moons. At length, all was done, and the cook was glad to hear that no more paste would be wanted, and the little girls might soon leave off giggling when Miss Young asked them, in the school-room, why they were jogging one another's elbows. Mr. Grey spared one of his men to deposit the precious piece of handiwork at Miss Young's lodging; and there, when she went home one cold afternoon, she found the screen standing between the fire and the door, and, pinned on it, a piece of paper, inscribed, "A Token of friendly Affection."

This was not, however, the only, nor the first gift with which Maria's parlour was enriched. Amidst all the bustle of furnishing the Hopes' house, Margaret had found time to plan and execute a window-curtain for her friend's benefit; and another person—no other than Philip Enderby—had sent in a chaise-longue, just the right size to stand between the fire and the table. It had gone hard with Maria to accept this last gift; but his nephew and nieces were Philip's plea of excuse for the act; and this plea cut her off from refusing: though in her heart she believed that neither the children nor ancient regard were in his thoughts when he did it, but rather Margaret's affection for her. For some time, this chaise-longue was a

couch of thorns; but now affairs had put on a newer aspect still, and Maria forgot her own perplexities and troubles in sympathy with her friend.

There was nothing to quarrel with in the look of the chaise-longue, when Margaret entered Maria's room in the twilight, in the afternoon of the appointed Thursday.

"Reading by fire-light?" said Margaret.

"I suppose I am: but it had not occurred to me,—the day-light went away so softly. Six o'clock, I declare! The days *are* lengthening, as we say every year. But we will have something better than fire-light, if you will be so kind as to set those candles on the table."

The time was long past when Maria thought of apologizing for asking her friend to do what her lameness rendered painful to herself. Margaret laid aside her bonnet and cloak behind the screen, lighted the candles, put more coals on the fire, and took her seat,—not beside Maria, but in a goodly arm-chair, which she drew forward from its recess.

"Now," said she, "we only want a cat to be purring on the rug, to make us a complete winter picture. The kettle will be coming soon, to sing on the hob; and that will do nearly as well. But, Maria, I wonder you have no cat. We have set up a cat. I think I will send you a kitten, some day, as a token of neighbourly affection."

"Thank you. Do you know, I was positively

assured lately that I had a cat? I said all I could in proof that I had none; but Mrs. Tucker persisted in her inquiries after its health, notwithstanding."

"What did she mean?"

"She said she saw a kitten run into the passage, and that it never came out again; so that it followed of course that it must be here still. One day, when I was in school, she came over to satisfy herself; and true enough, there had been a kitten. The poor thing jumped from the passage window into the yard, and went to see what they were about at the forge. A hot horse-shoe fell upon its back, and it mewed so dolefully that the people drowned it. So there you have the story of my cat, as it was told to me."

"Thank you, it is a good thing to know."

"But what does Mrs. Grey say to your setting up a cat? When she heard Mrs. Tucker's first inquiries, she took them for an imputation, and was vexed accordingly. 'Miss Young!' said she, 'You must be mistaken, Mrs. Tucker. Miss Young cannot afford to keep a kitten!'"

"O, for shame!" said Margaret, laughing. "But what is the annual expense of a kitten,—can you tell us? I am afraid we never considered that."

"Why, there is the breast of a fowl, once a year or so, when your cook forgets to shut the larder-door behind her. Cats never take the drumsticks

when there is a breast, you are aware. You know best how Mr. Hope looks, when the drumsticks and side-bones come to table, with an empty space in the middle of the dish where the breast ought to have been."

"I will tell you, the first time it happens." And Margaret sank into an absent fit, brought on by the bare suggestion of discontent at home. Hester had made her uncomfortable, the last thing before she left the house, by speaking sharply of Maria, without any fresh provocation. Undisciplined still by what had happened so lately, she had wished Maria Young a hundred miles off. Margaret meditated and sighed. It was some time before Maria spoke. When she did, she said,

"Margaret, do not you think people had better not persuade themselves and their very intimate friends that they are happy when they are not?"

"They had better not think, even in their own innermost minds, whether they are happy or not, if they can help it."

"True: but there are times when that is impossible,—when it is far better to avoid the effort. Come,—I suspect we may relieve each other just now, by allowing the truth. I will own, if you will, that I am very unhappy to-night. Never mind what it is about."

"I will if you will," replied Margaret, faintly smiling.

"There now, that's right! We shall be all the better for it. We have quite enough of seeming happy, God knows, beyond these doors. We can talk there about kittens and cold fowl. Here we will not talk at all, unless we like; and we will each groan as much as we please."

"I am sorry to hear you speak so," said Margaret, tenderly. "Not that I do not agree with you. I think it is a terrible mistake to fancy that it is religious to charm away grief, which, after all, is rejecting it before it has done its work; and, as for concealing it, there must be very good reasons indeed for that, to save it from being hypocrisy. But the more I agree with you, the more sorry I am to hear you say just what I was thinking. I am afraid you must be very unhappy, Maria."

"I am in great pain to-night; and I do not find that pain becomes less of an evil by one's being used to it. Indeed, I think the reverse happens; for the future comes into the consideration."

"Do you expect to go on to suffer this same pain? Can nothing cure it? Is there no help?"

"None, but in patience. There are intermissions, happily, and pretty long ones. I get through the summer very well; but the end of the winter—this same month of February—is a sad aching time; and so it must be for as many winters as I may have to live. But I am better off than I was. Last February I did not know you.

O, Margaret, if they had not brought you up from under the ice, the other day, how different would all have been to-night!"

"How strange it seems, to think of the difference that hung on that one act!" said Margaret, shivering again at the remembrance of her icy prison. "What, and where, should I have been now? And what would have been the change in this little world of ours? You would have missed me, I know; and on that account I am glad it ended as it did."

"And on no other?" asked Maria, looking earnestly at her friend.

"My sister would have grieved sadly at first,—you do not know what care she takes of me,—how often she is thinking of my comfort. And Edward is fond of me too: I know he is; but they live for each other, and could spare every one else. You and Morris would have been my mourners, and you two are enough to live for."

"To say nothing of others who may arise."

"I hope nothing more will arise in my life, Maria. I want no change. I have had enough of it."

"You think so now. I understand your feeling very well. But yet I can fancy that when you are twice as old as you are,—when a few grey hairs peep out among all that brown,—when this plump little hand grows thin, and that girlish figure of

yours looks dignified and middle-aged, and people say that nobody thought when you were young that you would turn out a handsome woman,—I can fancy that when all this has happened, you may be more disposed to look forward, and less disinclined to change, than you feel at this moment. But there is no use in saying so now. You shake your head, and I nod mine. You say 'No,' and I say 'Yes;' and there is an end of it."

"Where will you be then, I wonder?"

"I do not wish to know, nor even to inquire of my own judgment. My health is very bad,—worse than you are aware of. I cannot expect to be able to work always:—some of my present pupils are growing very tall; and no strangers will take me if I do not get much better; which is, I believe, impossible. The future, therefore, is all a mystery; and so let it remain. I am not anxious about that."

"But I am."

"Here comes tea. Now you will be doing a finer thing in making us a good cup of tea, than in settling my future ever so satisfactorily,—seeing that you cannot touch it with so much as your little finger. The tea is wholly in your power."

"You look forward to other people's grey hair and sedateness of face, though you will not to your own."

"Mere grey hair is as certain as futurity itself;

and I will allow you to prophesy that much for me or for anybody."

"Why should we not prophesy about your pupils too? They seem to be improving very much."

"They certainly are; and I am glad you have lighted upon the pleasantest subject I ever think about. O, Margaret, you do not know what encouragement I have about some of those children! Their lot is and will be a hard one, in many respects. It will be difficult for them to grow kindly, and liberal, and truthful, with such examples as they have before their eyes. They advance like the snail on the wall, creeping three inches on in the day, and falling back two at night. They get out of a petty mood of mind in the morning, and expand and grow interested in things out of Deerbrook; and then, in the evening, the greater part of this is undone, and they go to bed with their heads full of small, vile notions about their neighbours."

"And when they grow too wise to have their heads so filled, their hearts will be heavy for those who are not rising like themselves."

"That is unavoidable, and they must bear the sorrow. We must hope that they will disperse from Deerbrook, and find their way into a more genial society than they can ever know here. I must keep the confidence of my children sacred even from you, Margaret: but you may believe

me when I tell you, that if you knew all that we have to say to one another, you would find some of these children animated with really noble thoughts, and capable of really generous acts."

"'Some of them.' Mary in particular I venture to conjecture to be in your thoughts."

"Yes: Mary in particular; but she had always a more gentle and generous temper than her sisters. Fanny, however, is improving remarkably."

"I am delighted to hear it, and I had begun to suspect it. Fanny, I observe, lays fewer informations than she did; and there is more of thought, and less of a prying expression, in her face. She is really growing more like Mary in countenance. The little Rowlands—the younger ones—seem simple enough; but Matilda, what a disagreeable child she is!"

"The most that can be done with her, is to leave her only a poor creature—to strip her of the conceit and malice with which her mother would overlay her feeble intellect. This sounds deplorably enough; but, as parents will not speak the plain truth to themselves about their charge, governesses must. There is, perhaps, little better material in Fanny: but I trust we may one day see her more lowly than she can at present relish the idea of being, and with energy enough to improve under the discipline of life, when she can no longer have that of school. She and Mary have

been acknowledging to-day a fine piece of experience. Mr. Grey is pleased with their great improvement in Latin. He finds they can read, with ease and pleasure, some favourite classical scraps which he used to talk about without exciting any interest in them. They honestly denied having devoted any more time to Latin than before, or having taken any more pains; and no new methods have been tried. Here was a mystery. To-day they have solved it. They find that all is owing to their getting up earlier in the morning to teach those little orphans, the Woods, to read and sew."

"Not a very circuitous process," said Margaret; "love and kind interest, energy and improvement, —whether in Latin or anything else. But what did you mean just now about truth? What should make the Greys otherwise than truthful?"

"O, not the Greys! I was thinking of the other family when I said that. But that is a large subject: let us leave it till after tea. Will you give me another cup?"

"Now; shall we begin upon our large subject?" said she, as the door closed behind the tea-tray and kettle, and Margaret handed her her work-bag.

"I am aware that I asked for it," replied Margaret; "but it is a disagreeable topic, and perhaps we had better avoid it."

"You will take me for a Deerbrook person, if I say we will go into it, will not you?"

"O no: you have a reason, I see. So, why should not the little Rowlands be truthful?"

"Because they have so perpetual an example of falsehood before them at home. I have made some painful discoveries there lately."

"Is it possible you did not know that woman long ago?"

"I knew her obvious qualities, which there is no need to specify: but the depth of her untruth is a new fact to me."

"Are you sure of it now?"

"Quite sure of it in some particulars, and strongly suspecting it in others. Do not tell your sister anything of what I am going to say, unless you find it necessary for the direction of her conduct. Let your disclosures be rather to Mr. Hope. That is settled, is it? Well, Mrs. Rowland's ruling passion just now is hatred to your household."

"I suspected as much. But—the untruth."

"Wait a little. She dislikes you, all and severally."

"What, my brother?"

"O, yes; for marrying into the Grey connexion so decidedly. Did you ever hear that before?"

Margaret laughed; and her friend went on.

"This capture and imprisonment of her mother (for the poor old lady is not allowed to see whom she pleases) is chiefly to get her from under Mr. Hope's care. I fancy, from her air, and from some things she has dropped, that she has some

grand coup-de-theâtre in reserve about that matter; but this is merely suspicion: I will now speak only of what I know to exist. She is injuring your brother to an extent that he is not, but ought to be, aware of."

"What does she say? She shudders at his politics, I know."

"Yes; that might be ignorance merely, and even conscientious ignorance: so we will let that pass. She also hints, very plainly and extensively, that your brother and sister are not happy together."

"She is a wicked woman," said Margaret, with a deep sigh. "I half suspected what you tell me, from poor George's errand that unhappy day."

"Right. Mr. Rowland's irony was intended to stop his wife's insinuations before the children. She says the most unwarrantable things about Mrs. Grey's having made the match; and she intimates that Hester has several times gone to bed in hysterics, from Mr. Hope having upbraided her with taking him in."

"What *is* to be done?" cried Margaret, throwing down her work.

"Your brother will decide for himself whether to speak to Mr. Rowland, or to let the slander pass, and live it down. Our duty is to give him information; and I feel that it is a duty.—And now, have you been told anything about Mr. Hope's practice of dissection?"

Margaret related what she had heard on the bank of the river, and Hope's explanation of it.

"He knows more than he told you, I have no doubt," replied Maria. "The beginning of it was, your brother's surgery pupil having sent a great toe, in a handsome-looking sealed packet, to some lad in the village, who happened to open it at table. You may imagine the conjectures as to where it came from, and the revival of stories about robbing churchyards, and of prejudices about dissection. Mrs. Rowland could not let such an opportunity as this pass by; and her neighbours have been favoured with dark hints as to what has been heard under the churchyard wall, and what she herself has seen from her window in sleepless nights. Now, Mr. Hope must take notice of this. It is too dangerous a subject to be left quietly to the ignorance and superstitions of such a set of people as those among whom his calling lies. No ignorance on earth exceeds that of the country folks whom he attends."

"But they worship him," cried Margaret.

"They have worshipped him; but you know, worship easily gives place to hatred, among the extremely ignorant; and nothing is so likely to quicken the process as talk about violating graves. Do not be frightened; I tell you this to prevent mischief, not to prophesy it. Mr. Hope will take what measures he thinks fit: and I shall tell Mr.

Rowland, to-morrow morning, that I am the source of your information. I was just going to warn him to-day that I meant to speak to you in this way; but I left it till to-morrow, that I might not be prevented."

"Dear Maria, this will cost you your bread."

"I believe not; but this consideration belongs to that future of time on which, as I was saying, we cannot lay our little fingers. The present is clear enough—that Mr. Hope ought to know his own case."

"He shall know it. But, Maria, do you mean that Mrs. Rowland talks of all these affairs before her children?"

"When Mr. Rowland is not present to check it. And this brings me to something which I think ought to be said, though I have no proof to bring. Having found of late what things Mrs. Rowland can say for a purpose,—how variously and how monstrously untrue,—and seeing that all her enterprises are at present directed against the people who live in a pleasant little corner-house . . ."

"But why? You have not yet fully accounted for this enmity."

"I have not, but I will now. I think she joins your name with her brother's, and that she accordingly hates you now as she once hated Hester. But mind, I am not sure of this."

"But how . . . Why . . .?"

"You will divine that I have changed my opinion about Mr. Enderby's being engaged to Miss Bruce, since you asked me for my judgment upon it. I may very possibly be mistaken: but as Mr. Enderby lies under censure for forming and carrying on such an arrangement in strange concealment from his most intimate friends, I think it due to him at least to put the supposition that he may not be guilty."

Margaret could not speak, though a thousand questions struggled in her heart.

"I am aware," continued Maria, "with what confidence she has everywhere stated the fact of this engagement, and that Mrs. Enderby fully believes it. But I have been struck throughout with a failure of particularity in Mrs. Rowland's knowledge. She cannot tell when her brother last saw Miss Bruce, nor whether he has any intention of going to Rome. She does not know, evidently, whether he was engaged when he was last here; and I cannot get rid of the impression, that his being engaged now, is a matter of inference from a small set of facts, which will bear more than one interpretation."

"Surely she would not dare———" Margaret paused.

"It is a bold stroke (supposing me right), but she would strike boldly to make a quarrel between her brother and his friends in the corner-house: and

if the device should fail at last, she has the intermediate satisfaction of making them uncomfortable."

"Horrid creature!" said Margaret, feeling, however, that she would forgive all the horridness for the sake of finding that Mrs. Rowland had done this horrid thing.

"We must not forget," said Maria, "that there is another side to the question. Young men have been known to engage themselves mysteriously, and without sufficient respect to the confidence of intimate friends."

"This must be ascertained, Maria———;" and again Margaret stopped short with a blush of shame.

"By time, Margaret: in no other way. I cannot, of course, speak to Mr. Rowland, or any one, on so private an affair of the family; nor, under the circumstances, can Mr. Hope stir in it. We must wait: but it cannot be for long. Some illumination must reach Deerbrook soon,—either from Mr. Enderby's going to Rome, or coming here to see his mother."

"Mrs. Rowland said he would come here, she hoped, for his wedding journey."

"She did say so, I know. And she has told plenty of people that her brother is delighted that Mrs. Enderby is settled with her; whereas some beautiful plants arrived this morning for Mrs. Enderby's conservatory, by his orders (the Rowlands have no conservatory, you know). The

children were desired not to mention the arrival of these plants to grandmama; and Mrs. Rowland wrote by return of post,—I imagine to inform him for the first time of his mother's removal."

Margaret thought these things were too bad to be true.

"I should have said so too, some time ago; and, as I cannot too earnestly repeat, I may be wrong now. But I have done my duty in giving you reason for suspending your judgment of Mr. Enderby. This being done, we will talk of something else.—Now, do not you think there may be some difficulty in preserving my pupils from a habit of untruth?"

"Yes, indeed."

But the talking of something else did not operate so well as it sounded. The pauses were long after what had passed. At length, when Margaret detected herself in the midst of the speculation, 'if he is not engaged to Miss Bruce, it does not follow———,' she roused herself, and exclaimed,

"How very good it is of you, Maria, to have laid all this open to me!"

Maria hung her head over her work, and thought within herself that her friend could not judge of the deed. She replied,

"Thank you! I thought I should get some sympathy from you in the end, to repay me for the

irksomeness of exposing such a piece of social vice as this poor lady's conduct."

"Yes, indeed, I ought to have acknowledged it before, as I feel it; but you know there is so much to think over! It is so wonderful,—so almost inconceivable!"

"It is so."

"Is it quite necessary, Maria?—yes, I see it is necessary,—that you should speak to Mr. Rowland to-morrow? You are bound in honesty to do so; but it will be very painful. Can we not help you? Can we not in some way spare you?"

"No, you cannot, thank you. For Mr. Rowland's sake, no one must be by; and none of you can testify to the facts. No, leave me alone. By this time to-morrow night it will be done. What knock is that? No one ever knocks on my account. Surely it cannot be your servant already. It is only now half-past eight."

"I promised Hester I would go home early."

"She cannot want you half so much as I do. Stay another hour."

Margaret could not. Hester made a point of her returning at this time. When the cloaking and final chat were done, and Margaret was at the door, Maria called her. Margaret came skipping back to hear her friend's whisper.

"How is your wretchedness, Margaret?"

"How is yours?" was Margaret's reply.

"Much better. The disburdening of it is a great comfort."

"And the pain—the aching?"

"O, never mind that!"

Margaret shook her head; she could not but mind it—but wish that she could take it upon herself sometimes. She had often thought lately, that she should rather enjoy a few weeks of Maria's pain, as an alternative to the woe under which she had been suffering; but this, if she could have tried the experiment, she would probably have found to be a mistake. When she saw her friend cover her eyes with her hand, as if for a listless hour of solitude, she felt that she had been wrong in yielding to her sister's jealousy of her being so much with Maria; and she resolved that, next time, Maria should appoint the hour for her return home.

When Maria was thus covering her eyes with her hand, she was thinking,—"Now half this task is over. The other half to-morrow—and then the consequences!"

When Margaret entered the drawing-room at home, where her brother was reading aloud to Hester, he exclaimed,

"We beat all Deerbrook for early visiting, I think. Here are you home; and I dare say Mr. Tucker has still another pipe to smoke, and the wine is not mulled yet at the Jameses."

"It is quite time Margaret was giving us a little

of her company, I am sure," said Hester. "You forget how early she went. If it was not for the school, I think she and Maria would spend all their time together. I have every wish not to interfere; but I cannot think that this friendship has made Maria less selfish."

"It would, I dare say, my dear, but that there was no selfishness to begin upon. I am afraid she is very unwell, Margaret."

"In much pain, I fear."

"I will go and see if I can do her any good. You can glance over what we have read, and I shall be back in a quarter of an hour, to go on with it."

"I wonder you left Maria, if she is so poorly."

"I determined that I would not, another time; but this time I had promised."

"Pray, do not make out that I am any restraint upon your intercourse with Maria. And yet,—it is not quite fair to say that, either."

"I do not think it is quite fair."

"But you should warn me,—you should tell me, if I ask anything unreasonable. When are you going again? An old patient of my husband's has sent us a quarter of a chest of very fine oranges. We will carry Maria a basketful of oranges to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX.

LONG WALKS.

The unhappy are indisposed to employment: all active occupations are wearisome and disgusting in prospect, at a time when everything, life itself, is full of weariness and disgust. Yet the unhappy must be employed, or they will go mad. Comparatively blessed are they, if they are set in families, where claims and duties abound, and cannot be escaped. In the pressure of business there is present safety and ultimate relief. Harder is the lot of those who have few necessary occupations, enforced by other claims than their own harmlessness and profitableness. Reading often fails. Now and then it may beguile; but much oftener the attention is languid, the thoughts wander, and associations with the subject of grief are awakened. Women who find that reading will not do, will obtain no relief from sewing. Sewing is pleasant enough in moderation to those whose minds are at ease the while; but it is an employment which is trying to the nerves when

long continued, at the best; and nothing can be worse for the harassed, and for those who want to escape from themselves. Writing is bad. The pen hangs idly suspended over the paper, or the sad thoughts that are alive within write themselves down. The safest and best of all occupations for such sufferers as are fit for it, is intercourse with young children. An infant might beguile Satan and his peers the day after they were couched on the lake of fire, if the love of children chanced to linger amidst the ruins of their angelic nature. Next to this comes honest, genuine acquaintanceship among the poor; not mere charity-visiting, grounded on soup-tickets and blankets, but intercourse of mind, with real mutual interest between the parties. Gardening is excellent, because it unites bodily exertion with a sufficient engagement of the faculties, while sweet, compassionate Nature is ministering cure in every sprouting leaf and scented blossom, and beckoning sleep to draw nigh, and be ready to follow up her benignant work. Walking is good,—not stepping from shop to shop, or from neighbour to neighbour; but stretching out far into the country, to the freshest fields, and the highest ridges, and the quietest lanes. However sullen the imagination may have been among its griefs at home, here it cheers up and smiles. However listless the limbs may have been when sustaining a too heavy heart, here they are braced,

and the lagging gait becomes buoyant again. However perverse the memory may have been in presenting all that was agonizing, and insisting only on what cannot be retrieved, here it is first disregarded, and then it sleeps; and the sleep of the memory is the day in Paradise to the unhappy. The mere breathing of the cool wind on the face in the commonest highway, is rest and comfort which must be felt at such times to be believed. It is disbelieved in the shortest intervals between its seasons of enjoyment; and every time the sufferer has resolution to go forth to meet it, it penetrates to the very heart in glad surprise. The fields are better still; for there is the lark to fill up the hours with mirthful music; or, at worst, the robin and the flocks of fieldfares, to show that the hardest day has its life and hilarity. But the calmest region is the upland, where human life is spread out beneath the bodily eye, where the mind roves from the peasant's nest to the spiry town, from the school-house to the church-yard, from the diminished team in the patch of fallow, or the fisherman's boat in the cove, to the viaduct that spans the valley, or the fleet that glides ghost-like on the horizon. This is the perch where the spirit plumes its ruffled and drooping wings, and makes ready to let itself down any wind that Heaven may send.

No doubt Margaret found the benefit of exer-

cise, and the solitary enjoyment of the country; for, during the last few weeks, walking seemed to have become a passion with her. Hester was almost out of patience about it, when for a moment she lost sight of what she well knew must be the cause of this strong new interest. Every doubtful morning, Margaret was at the window exploring the clouds. Every fine day she laid her watch on the table before her, impatiently waiting the approach of the hour when her brother was to come in for Hester, and when she might set off by herself, not to return till dinner-time. She became renowned in Deerbrook for the length of her excursions. The grocer had met her far out in one direction, when returning from making his purchases at the market-town. The butcher had seen her in the distant fields, when he paid a visit to his grazier in the pastures. Dr. Levitt had walked his horse beside her in the lane which formed the limit of the longer of his two common rides; and many a neighbour or patient of Mr. Hope's had been surprised at her declining a cast in a taxed cart or gig, when there was only a long stretch of plain road before her, and the lanes and fields were too miry to enable her to seek any variety in them, in her way home.

These were, in fact, Margaret's times of refreshing,—of practical worship. These were the times when she saw what at other moments she only

repeated to herself,—that all things are right, and that our personal trials derive their bitterness from our ignorance and spiritual inexperience. At these times she could not only pity all who suffered, but congratulate all who enjoyed, and could afford feelings of disinterested regard to Philip, and of complacency to Miss Bruce. She remembered that Miss Bruce was unconscious of having injured her,—was possibly unaware even of her existence; and then she enjoyed the luxury of blessing her rival, and of longing for an opportunity to serve her secretly and silently, as the happy girl's innocence of all wrong towards her deserved.

Margaret's desire for a long solitary walk was as strong as ever, the day after she had visited Maria. No opportunity had occurred of speaking to her brother without alarming Hester; and she had almost determined merely to refer him to Maria, instead of telling the story herself. She should not see him again till dinner. He was gone into the country; the day was gloomy and cold, and Hester was not disposed to leave the fireside: so Margaret issued forth, with thick shoes, umbrella and muff,—guarded against everything that might occur overhead and under foot. She had generally found hope, or at least comfort, abroad; to-day, when she ought to have been much happier, she found anxiety and fear. The thought,

the very words, would incessantly recur, 'If he is not engaged to Miss Bruce, it does not follow . . .' Then she seriously grieved for her brother, and the troubles which she feared awaited him; and then she reproached herself with not grieving enough,—not having attention enough to spare from her own concerns. While she was walking along on the dry causeway, looking straight before her, but thinking of far other things than the high road, she was startled by the stroke of a horse's foot against a stone close by her side, and a voice speaking almost in her ear. It was only Edward. He was going a couple of miles forward, and he brought his horse beside the raised causeway, so that they could converse as if walking together.

"There is nobody to overhear us, I think," said Margaret, looking round. "I have been wanting, since yesterday evening, to speak to you alone,—about something very disagreeable, which I would not disturb Hester with. You, of course, can do as you please about telling her."

She related to him the whole story of Mrs. Rowland's imputations and proceedings,—her reports of the hysterics and their origin, the body-snatching, and the cause and mode of Mrs. Enderby's removal. Margaret had always considered her brother as a man of uncommon nerve; and her surprise was therefore great at seeing him change colour as he did.

"We shall agree," said she, "that the worst of all this is, that there is some truth at the bottom of part of it."

'O Heavens!' thought Hope, 'is it possible that Mrs. Grey can have told the share she had in my marriage?' It was but a momentary fear. Margaret went on.

"I have never hoped,—I never hoped at Birmingham, and much less here,—that Hester could escape the observation of her neighbours,—that her occasional agitation of spirits should not excite remark and speculation. As we are not quite whole and sound in our domestic peace,—(I must speak plainly, brother, at such a time as this,) I should think it would be better to take no notice of that set of imputations. I trust we shall live them down."

"You gave me great comfort in a few words once," said Hope. "Do you remember saying, 'When the time for acting comes, see how she will act!' You know her well, and you judge her rightly: and you will, perhaps, be the less sorry to hear that the time seems coming when we may all have to act,—I scarcely see how,—but against adversity."

"She will come out nobly then. I fear nothing for her but too much prosperity."

"There is no fear of that, I assure you," said Hope, smiling somewhat sadly.

"You find the effect of this woman's slanders."

"My situation has, from one cause or more, totally changed since you first knew me. It would break Hester's heart to hear what I am subjected to in the discharge of my daily business. I tell her a trifle now and then, to prepare her for what may happen; but she and you do not know a tenth part of what is inflicted upon me."

"And what may happen?"

"I cannot see the extent of it myself: but I am losing my practice every day.—No, not through any failure; not through any of the accidents which will happen in all medical practice. There are reports of such abroad, I believe; but nothing is commoner than those reports. The truth is, no patient of mine has died, or failed to do well, for an unusually long space of time. The discontent with me is from other causes."

"From Mrs. Rowland's tongue, I doubt not, more than from your politics."

"The ignorance of the people about us is the great evil. Without this, neither Mrs. Rowland, nor any one else, could persuade them that I rob the church-yard, and vaccinate children to get patients, and draw good teeth to sell again."

"O, monstrous!" said Margaret, who yet could not help laughing. "You never draw teeth, do you?"

"Sometimes; but not when I can get people to

go to the dentist at Blickley. Mrs. Grey used to boast to you of my popularity; but I never liked it much. I had to be perpetually on the watch to avoid confidences; and you see how fast the stream is at present running the contrary way. I can hardly get on my horse now, without being insulted at my own door."

"Must you submit to all this?"

"By no means. I have called two or three men to account, and shaken my whip over one or two more,—with excellent effect. If there were none but bullies among my enemies, I could easily deal with them."

"But cannot we go away, and settle somewhere else?"

"O no! Wherever I might go, it would soon be understood that I had been obliged to leave Deerbrook, from being detected in body-snatching and the like. I owe it to myself to stay. We must remain, and live down all imputations whatever, if we can."

"And if we cannot?"

"Then we shall see what to do when the time comes."

"And having managed the bullies, how do you propose to manage Mrs. Rowland? What do you think of speaking to Mr. Grey?"

"I shall not do that. The Greys have no concern with it; but they will think they have. Then

there will be a partisan warfare, with me for the pretext, and the two families have had quite warfare enough for a life-time already. No, I shall not bring the Greys into it. I am sorry enough for Mr. Rowland, for I am sure he has no part in all this. I shall go to him to-day. I should confront the lady at once, and call her to account, but that Miss Young must be considered. The more courageous and disinterested she is, the more care we must take of her."

"Perhaps she is at this moment telling Mr. Rowland what we talked about last night. How very painful!—Do you know she thinks,—(it is right to tell the whole for other people's sake),—she thinks that what Mrs. Rowland says is not to be trusted, in any case where she feels enmity. Maria even doubts whether Mr. Enderby has treated you and his other friends so very negligently,—whether he is engaged to Miss Bruce, after all."

Mr. Hope was so much engaged about one of his stirrups while Margaret said this, that he could not observe where and how she was looking.

"Very likely," replied Hope, at length. "Hester has thought all along that this was possible. We shall know the truth from Enderby himself, one of these days, by act or word. Meantime, I, for one, shall wait to hear his own story."

There was another pause, at the end of which

Mr. Hope clapped spurs to his horse, and said he must be riding on. Margaret called him back for a moment, to ask what he wished her to do about informing Hester of the state of affairs. Mr. Hope was disposed to tell her the whole, if possible; but not till he should have come to some issue with Mr. Rowland. He hated mysteries,—any concealments in families; and it was due both to Hester and to himself that there should be no concealment of important affairs from her. The only cautions to be observed were, to save her from suspense, to avoid the appearance of a formal telling of bad news, and to choose an opportunity when she might have time, before seeing any of the Rowlands, to consider the principles which should regulate her conduct to them, that she might do herself honour by the consistency and temper of which she was capable under any circumstances, when she was only allowed time.

This was settled, and he rode off with almost his usual gaiety of air.

He saw Mr. Rowland before night. The next day but one, a travelling carriage from Blickley was seen standing at Mr. Rowland's door; and before the clock struck nine, it was loaded with trunks and bandboxes, and crowded with people. As it drove down the village street, merry little faces appeared at each carriage window. Mr. Rowland was on the box. He was going to take

his family to Cheltenham for the spring months. Miss Rowland was rather delicate, and Deerbrook was cold in March. Mrs. Enderby was left behind; but there was Phœbe to take care of her; and Mr. Rowland was to return as soon as he had settled his family. It seemed rather a pity, to be sure, that the old lady had been moved out of her own house just before she was to be left alone in her new residence; but, between Mr. Rowland and her maid, she would be taken good care of; and the family would return when the warm weather set in.

CHAPTER X.

DISCLOSURES.

The whole village seemed relieved by the departure of the Rowlands. Mrs. Grey, who had always been refused admission to her old friend on one pretence or another, was joyfully welcomed by Phœbe, and was plunged into all the delights of neighbourly chat before the clock struck twelve, on the very first morning. Fanny and Mary Grey voluntarily offered to go to Miss Young, now that they were her only pupils, to save her the trouble of the walk to the school-room. This was a great relief to Maria, and her little parlour held the three very nicely; and when the girls had sufficiently admired the screen over again,—their father's profile, the planet, and the Dargle, they settled quite as well as at home. There was still a corner left for cousin Margaret, when she chose to come with her German books, or her work, and her useful remarks on what they were doing. No immediate consequences had happened to Maria from her plain dealing with Mr. Rowland; and

she was quite ready to enjoy the three months of freedom, without looking too anxiously towards the end of them. The very gardener at the Rowlands seemed to bestir himself with unusual alacrity to put the garden into spring trim; and the cook and housemaid might be seen over the hedge, walking arm-in-arm on the gravel walks, smelling at the mezereon, and admiring Miss Anna's border of yellow crocuses, as the gardener said, as much as if they had been fine plants out of a conservatory. The birds themselves seemed to begin their twittering in the trees, and the cows their lowing in the meadow, from the hour that Mrs. Rowland went away. In other words, there were many whom that event left free and at ease to observe the harmonies of nature, who were usually compelled to observe only the lady, and the discords of her household.

It was only the second day after the departure of the family that Margaret took her seat in the offered corner of Maria's parlour. She laid down her book, and took up her work, when the question arose, which has probably interested all intelligent school-girls for many a year,—What made so many Athenians,—so many, that there must have been some wise and good men among them,—treat such a person as Socrates in the way they did? Margaret was quite occupied in admiring the sort of Socratic method with which Maria drew out

from the minds of her pupils some of the difficult philosophy of Opinion, and the liberality with which she allowed for the distress of heathen moralists at having the sanction of Custom broken up. Margaret was thus quite occupied with the delight of seeing a great subject skilfully let down into young minds, and the others were no less busy with the subject itself, when Mary started, and said it made her jump to see Sydney bring Fairy close up to the window. Fanny imperiously bade her mind what she was about, and let Sydney alone; but yet, in a minute or two, Fanny's own eyes were detected wandering into the yard where Sydney still remained. "He is getting Fairy shod," she said in a soliloquizing tone. Every one laughed,—the ide of shoeing a fairy was so ridiculous!—and some witticisms, about Bottom the weaver, and his ass's head, were sported. It was evident that Socrates had no more chance this day, and Maria changed the subject.

"Sydney looks very much as if he wanted to come in," observed Mary.

Sydney did particularly wish to come in; but he saw that cousin Margaret was there: and he had felt an unconquerable awe of cousin Margaret ever since the day of his conveying her over the ice. So he stood irresolutely watching, as nail after nail was driven into Fairy's hoof, casting glances every minute at the window.

"Shall I see what he wants?" asked Margaret, perceiving that lessons would not go on till Sydney had got out what he wished to say. "May I open the window for a moment, Maria, to speak to him?"

"What do you think?" cried Sydney, taking instant advantage of the movement, and carrying off his awkwardness by whipping the window-sill while he spoke. "What *do* you think? Mr. Enderby is come by the coach this morning. I saw him myself; and you might have met our Ben carrying his portmanteau home from where he was put down, half an hour ago. We'll have rare sport, if he stays as long as he did last summer. I do believe," he continued, leaning into the room, and speaking with a touch of his mother's mystery, "he would have come long since, if Mrs. Rowland had not been here. I wish she had taken herself off two months ago, and then I might have had a run with the harriers with him, as he promised I should."

"Now you have said just a little too much, Sydney; so you may go," said Maria. "Shut down the window, will you?"

It was well for Margaret that there was the recess of the window to lean in. There she stood, not speaking a word. It was not in nature for Maria to refrain from casting a glance at her,—which glance grew into a look of intelligence.

"You do not quite wink as mama does," observed Fanny; "but I know very well what you mean, Miss Young."

"So people always fancy when they observe upon nothing, or upon what they know nothing about, Fanny. But I thought you were convinced, some time ago, that you should not watch people's countenances, to find out what they are thinking, any more than . . . ."

"I should read a letter they are writing," interrupted Fanny. "Well, I beg your pardon, Miss Young; but I really thought I saw you looking at cousin Margaret's face. However, I dare say everybody supposes the same,—that Mr. Enderby would not have been here now if Mrs. Rowland had not gone away. You need not mind Mary and me, Miss Young; you know we hear all about Mrs. Rowland at home."

"I know you are apt to fancy that you understand all about Mrs. Rowland, my dear; but perhaps Mrs. Rowland herself might happen to differ from you, if she could look into your mind. It is for you to settle with yourself whether you think she would be satisfied that you have done by her as you would have her do by you. This is your own affair, Fanny; so now, without any one trying to see in your face what you think of yourself, we will go to our business."

The scratching of pens in the exercise books,

and the turning over of the dictionary, now proceeded for some time in profound silence, in the midst of which Margaret stole back to her corner.

"There goes twelve!" softly exclaimed Mary. "Mama said we might go with her to call at cousin Hester's, if we were home and ready by half past twelve. We shall not be nearly done, Miss Young."

Miss Young did not take the hint. She only said,

"Is your mama going to call on Mrs. Hope? Then, Margaret, do not let us detain you here. You will wish to be at home, I am sure."

Never, as Maria supposed, had Margaret more impatiently desired to be at home. Though accustomed to go in and out of Maria's abode, with or without reason assigned, she had not now ventured to move, though the little room felt like a prison. An awkward consciousness had fixed her to her seat. Now, however, she made haste to depart, promising to visit her friend again very soon. The little girls wanted her to arrange to come every morning, and stay all the time of lessons; but Margaret declined making any such engagement.

As she went home, she scarcely raised her eyes, for fear of seeing *him;* and yet she lingered for an instant at her brother's door, from a feel-

ing of disappointment at having met no one she knew.

She had fully and undoubtingly intended to tell Hester of Philip's arrival; but when she had taken off her bonnet, and settled herself beside her sister in the drawing-room, she found that it was quite impossible to open the subject. While she was meditating upon this, the entrance of the Greys seemed to settle the matter. She supposed they would make the disclosure for her; but she soon perceived that they had not heard the news. Mrs. Grey went on quoting Mrs. Enderby and Phœbe, and Sophia remarked on the forsaken condition of the old lady, in a way which was quite incompatible with any knowledge of the new aspect which affairs had assumed this morning. It was a great relief to Margaret to be spared the discussion of a fact on which so much was to be said; but lo! in the midst of a flow of talk about fomentations, and the best kind of night-light for a sick room, there was a knock at the door, every stroke of which was recognised to a certainty by Margaret. While the other ladies were pushing back their chairs, to break up the appearance of a gossip, and make room for another party of visitors, Margaret was wholly occupied with contriving to sit upright, notwithstanding the dimness that came over her sight.

It was he. He entered the room quickly, looked taller than ever, as Sophia thought to her-

self, and more than ever like a Polish Count, now that his blue great-coat was buttoned up to the chin. He stopped for half a moment on seeing ladies in cloaks and bonnets, and then came forward, and shook hands with everybody. Hester observed that he looked full at Margaret as he held out his hand to her; but Margaret did not see this, for, though she commanded herself wonderfully, she could not meet his eye. Of course, he was asked when he arrived, and had to answer the question, and also the remarks which were made on the length of his absence, and on the expectations of everybody in Deerbrook that he would have visited the old place at Christmas or New Year. He was then pitied on account of the state of his mother's health. To this he made no reply whatever; but when Mrs. Grey inquired how he found Mrs. Enderby, he briefly,—somewhat abruptly,—answered, that he thought her very ill. It was equally impossible for Margaret to sit totally silent while all this was going on, and to address herself to him: she therefore kept up some conversation with Sophia on the greenhouse, and the fate of the evergreens in the shrubbery, in consequence of the severity of the frost in January,—which laurestinus had been lost, and how the arbutus had suffered, and how long it would be before the laurels on the grass could grow up to their former size and beauty. While Sophia was telling

that the greenhouse occupied a great deal of time, and that she had therefore turned over her interest in it to Sydney, and begged the little girls to divide her garden between them, Mr. Enderby was seen to take Hester into the window, and after remarking upon the snow-drops beneath, to speak privately to her. Margaret was afraid Mrs. Grey would take the hint, and go away. Her presence now appeared a sort of protection, which Margaret exerted herself to retain, by not allowing the conversation to flag. She need not have feared; Mrs. Grey was turning over in her mind how she might best introduce her congratulations on Mr. Enderby's engagement, and her inquiries after Miss Bruce's welfare; topics on which she conceived that good manners required her to enter. Meantime, Mr. Enderby had been saying to Hester—

"You will excuse the offer of my good wishes on your settlement here being briefly and hastily made; but I am at this moment in great anxiety. Is Hope at home?"

"No: he is some miles off in the country."

"Then I must charge you with a message to him. I think my mother very ill; and I find it is some time since Hope has seen her. Will you beg him to come to her without loss of time, when he returns?"

"Certainly; he will be home within two or three hours, I have no doubt."

"And then ask him whether he will not prescribe a visit from you to my mother. It will do her good, I am confident. You know she is all alone now with her maid."

"I am aware of that. It is not from negligence or disinclination, I assure you, that we have seen so little of Mrs. Enderby for some time past."

"I know it, I know it," said he, shaking his head. Then, after a pause,—"Shall you be at home this evening?"

"Yes."

"And alone?"

"Yes. Will you come?"

"Thank you; I will come in for an hour. I shall then hear Hope's report of my mother; and —between ourselves—I want a few words with your sister. Can you manage this for me?"

"No doubt."

He was gone in another moment, with a bow to the whole party.

"Gone!" cried Mrs. Grey; "and I have not said a word to him about his engagement and Miss Bruce! How very odd he must think us, Sophia!"

"There will be plenty of time for all we have to say," observed Hester. "He is so uneasy about his mother, I see, that he will not leave her yet awhile."

Margaret was sure she perceived in her sister's beautiful eye and lip the subtle expression of amusement that they bore when a gay thought was in her mind, or when her neighbours were setting off in speculation on a wrong scent.

"But half the grace of one's good wishes is in their being offered readily," said Mrs. Grey, "as I was saying to Sophia, the other day, when we were considering whether Mr. Grey should not write to Mr. Enderby with our congratulations. *We* should not like to appear backward on such an occasion, for many reasons.—Well, now, my dears; one thing more. You must come to tea with us this evening. It will be a mild evening, I have no doubt; and I have sent to Miss Young, to say that my sedan will bring her at six o'clock. We have quite set our hearts upon having you for a sociable evening."

"Thank you," said Hester: "we would come with great pleasure, but that we are engaged."

"Engaged, my dear! Margaret has just told us that you have no engagement."

"So Margaret thought: but we are engaged. A friend of Mr. Hope's is coming to spend the evening, and I promised that we would be at home."

"Dear!" said Sophia; "and we had quite set our hearts upon your coming."

"Cannot you bring the gentleman with you, my

dear? I am sure Mr. Grey will be happy to see any friend of Mr. Hope's."

"Thank you; but he is coming on business."

"O, well!—But Margaret can be spared, surely. I suppose you must stay and make tea, my dear. It would not do, I know, for you to appear to neglect your husband's country patients,—particularly in the present state of affairs. But Margaret can come, surely. Sydney shall step for her, a little before six."

"O yes," said Sophia; "Margaret can come. The gentleman can have no business with her, I suppose."

Margaret was again puzzled with the fun that lurked in the eye and lip. She had been passive till now; but seeing Hester's determination that she should not go, she said very decidedly that she should much prefer coming some evening when her brother and sister need not be left behind.

"Mrs. Grey is not very well pleased," observed Margaret, when their visitors were gone. "Could not you have been a little more explicit as to this gentleman, whoever he may be?"

"I thought it better not to say more," said Hester, now unable to help stealing a glance at her sister. "Our visitor is to be Mr. Enderby. He is so uneasy about his mother, that my husband is to see her this afternoon; and Mr. Enderby offers to come in the evening, to discuss her case."

After a slight pause, Hester continued,—"Sophia was very positive about its being impossible that our visitor could have any business with you,—was not she?"

"O, Hester!" said Margaret, imploringly, with her eyes full of tears.

"Well, well," said Hester, remembering how cruel this speech might appear to her sister, "I ought not to speak to you from my own habitual disbelief of Mrs. Rowland's news. I will go away, dear; only just saying first, that I like Philip's looks very well. He does not seem happier than he ought to be, while his mother is so ill: nor does he act as if he felt he had neglected us, his old friends. As my husband says, we must hear his own story before we judge him."

When she left the room, Margaret could not have settled with herself whether there was most pain or pleasure in the prospect of this evening. Five minutes before, she had believed that she should spend it at the Greys',—should hear the monotonous hiss of the urn, which seemed to take up its song, every time she went, where it had left off last;—should see Mrs. Grey's winks from behind it;—should have the same sort of cake, cut by Sophia into pieces of exactly the same size;—should hear Sydney told to be quiet, and the little girls to go to bed;—should have to play Mrs. Grey's favourite waltz, and sing Mr.

Grey's favourite song, and at last, to refuse a glass of sherry three times over, and come away, after hearing much wonder expressed that the evening was gone already.—Now, instead of this, there was to be the fear and constraint of Philip's presence,—so unlike what that had ever been before! —no longer gay, easy, and delightful, but all that was awkward. No one would be sure of what the others were feeling; or whether there was any sufficient reason for their mutual feelings being so changed. Who would find the conversation? What could be talked about which would not bring one or another into collision with Mrs. Rowland or Miss Bruce? But yet, there would be his presence, and with it, bliss. There would be his very voice; and something of his thoughts could not but come out. She was better pleased than if his evening was to be spent anywhere else.

Dinner passed, — she did not know how,— except that her brother thought Mrs. Enderby not materially worse than when he saw her last. —The tea-tray came, and stood an hour,—Mr. Hope being evidently restless and on the watch. He said at last that it would be better to get tea over before Enderby came; and Margaret repeated in her own mind that it *was* less awkward; and yet she was disappointed. The moment the table was cleared, *his* knock was heard. He

would not have tea: he had been making his mother's tea, and had had a cup with her. And now, what was Hope's judgment on her state of health?

The gentlemen had scarcely entered upon the subject when a note was brought in for Margaret. Everything made her nervous; but the purport of this note was merely to ask for a book which she had promised to lend Mrs. Levitt. As she went up to her room for it, she was vexed that the interruption had occurred now; and was heartily angry with herself that she could command herself no better, and be no more like other people than she fancied she had been this day. "There is Hester," thought she, "looking nothing less than merry, and talking about whatever occurs, as if nothing had happened since we met him last: while I sit, feeling like a fool, with not a word to say, and no courage to say it if I had. I wonder whether I have always been as insignificant and dull as I have seen myself to be to-day. I do not believe I ever thought about the matter before: I wish I could forget it now." Notwithstanding her feeling of insignificance in the drawing-room, however, she was so impatient to be there again that her hands trembled with eagerness in doing up the parcel for Mrs. Levitt.

When she re-entered the drawing-room, Philip was there alone,—standing by the fire. Margaret's

first impulse was to retreat; but her better judgment prevailed in time to intercept the act. Philip said,

"Mr. and Mrs. Hope have, at my desire, given me the opportunity of speaking to you alone. You must not refuse to hear what I have to say, because it is necessary to the vindication of my honour;—and it is also due to another person."

Of course, Margaret sat down. She seemed to intend to speak, and Philip waited to hear her; but no words came, so he went on.

"You have been told, I find, that I have been for some time engaged to a lady who is now at Rome,—Miss Bruce. How such a notion originated, we need not inquire. The truth is, that I am but slightly acquainted with Miss Bruce, and that nothing has ever occurred which could warrant such a use of that lady's name. I heard nothing of this till to-day, and———"

"Is it possible?" breathed Margaret.

"I was shocked to hear of it from my poor mother: but infinitely more shocked—grieved to the very soul, to find that you, Margaret, believed it."

"How could we help it? It was your sister who told us."

"What does my sister know of me, compared with you? I thought—I hoped,—but I see now that I was presumptuous,—I thought that you

knew me enough, and cared for me enough, to understand my mind, and trust my conduct through whatever you might hear of me from others. I have been deceived,—I mean I have deceived myself, as to the relation in which we stand. I do not blame you, Margaret,—that is, I will not if I can help it,—for what you have given credit to about me; but I did not think you would have mortified me so deeply."

"You are partly wrong now; you are unjust at this moment," replied Margaret, looking up with some spirit. "I do not wish to speak of Mrs. Rowland,—but remember, your mother never doubted what your sister said;—the information was given in such a way as left almost an impossibility of disbelief. There was nothing to set against the most positive assurances,—nothing from you,—not a word to any of your old friends——."

"And there was I, working away on a new and good plan of life, living for you, and counting the weeks and days between me and the time when I might come and show you what your power over me had enabled me to do,—and you were all the while despising or forgetting me, allowing me no means of defending myself, yielding me up to dishonour with a mere shake of the head, as if I had been an acquaintance of two or three ball-nights. It is clear that you knew my mind no better than I now find I knew yours."

"What would you have had me do?" asked Margaret, with such voice as she had.

"I believe I had not thought of that," said Philip, half laughing. "I only felt that you ought to have trusted me,—that you must have known that I loved neither Miss Bruce, nor any one but you; and that I could not be engaged to any one while I loved you.—Tell me, at once, Margaret,—did I not deserve this much from you?"

"You did," said Margaret, distinctly. "But there is another way of viewing the whole, which does not seem to have occurred to you. I have been to blame, perhaps; but if you had thought of the other possibility———"

"What other? O! do speak plainly."

"I must, at such a time as this. If I could not think you guilty, I might fancy myself to have been mistaken."

"And did you fancy so? Did you suppose I neither loved you, nor meant you to think that I did?"

"I did conclude myself mistaken."

"O, Margaret! I should say—if I dared—that such a thought,—such humility, such generosity,—could come of nothing but love."

Margaret made no reply. They understood one another too completely for words. Even in the first gush of joy, there was intense bitterness in the thought of what Margaret must have suffered;

and Philip vowed, in the bottom of his soul, that his whole life should be devoted to make her forget it. He could have cursed his sister with equal energy.

There was no end to what had to be said. Philip was impatient to tell what he had been doing, and the reasons of the whole of his conduct. Margaret's views had become his own, as to the desultoriness of the life he had hitherto led. He had applied himself diligently to the study of the law, intending to prove to himself and to her, that he was capable of toil, and of a steady aim at an object in life, before he asked her to decide what their relation to each other was henceforth to be.

"Surely," said he, "you might have discovered this much from my letters to my mother."

"And how were we to know what was in your letters to your mother?"

"Do you mean that you have not read or heard them all this time?"

"Not a word for these three months. We have scarcely seen her for many weeks past; and then she merely showed us what long letters you wrote her."

"And they were all written for you! She told me, the last time I was here, that she could keep nothing from you: and, relying upon her words, I have supposed this to be a medium of communication between us throughout. I could have no

other, you know. When did my mother leave off reading my letters to you?"

"From the week you went away last. Mrs. Rowland came in while we were in the midst of one; and the consequence was . . ."

"That you have been in the dark about me ever since. You saw that I did write."

"Yes. I have seen most of the post-marks—and the interiors—upside down. But Mrs. Rowland was always there—or else Phœbe."

"And have you really known nothing about me whatever?"

"Little George told me that you had lessons to learn, very hard and very long, and, if possible, more difficult than his."

"And did not you see then that I was acting upon your views?"

"I supposed Miss Bruce might have had them first."

"Miss Bruce!" he cried, in a tone of annoyance. "I know nothing of Miss Bruce's views on any subject. I cannot conceive how my sister got such a notion into her head—why she selected her."

Margaret was going to mention the "sisterly affection" which had long subsisted between Miss Bruce and Mrs. Rowland, according to the latter; but it occurred to her that it was just possible that Philip might not be altogether so indifferent

to Miss Bruce as Miss Bruce was to him; and this thought sealed her lips.

"I wonder whether Rowland believed it all the time," said Philip: "and Hope? It was unworthy of Hope's judgment—of his faith—to view the case so wrongly."

"I am glad you are beginning to be angry with somebody else," said Margaret. "Your wrath seemed all to be for me: but your old friends, even to your mother, appear to have had no doubt about the matter."

"There is an excuse for them which I thought you had not. I am an altered man, Margaret—you cannot conceive how altered since I began to know you. They judged of me by what I was once . . . . We will not say how lately."

"I assure you I do not forget the accounts you used to give of yourself."

"What accounts?"

"Of how you found life pleasant enough without philosophy, and without anything to do, . . . and other wise sayings of the kind."

"It is by such things that those who knew me long ago have judged me lately—a retribution which I ought not to complain of. If they believed me fickle, idle, selfish, it is all fair. O! Margaret, men know nothing of morals till they know women."

"Are you serious?"

"I am solemnly persuaded of it. Happy they who grow up beside mothers and sisters whom they can revere! But for this, almost all men would be without earnestness of heart—without a moral purpose—without generosity, while they are all the while talking of honour. It was so with me before I knew you. I am feeble enough, and selfish enough yet, God knows! but I hope still to prove that you have made a man of me, out of a light, selfish . . . . . But what right have I, you may think, to ask you to rely upon me, when I have so lately been what I tell you? I did not mean to ask you yet. This very morning, nothing could be further from my intentions. I do not know how long I should have waited before I should have dared. My sister has rendered me an inestimable service amidst all the mischief she did me. I thank her. Ah! Margaret, you smile!"

Margaret smiled again. The smile owned that she was thinking the same thing about their obligations to Mrs. Rowland.

"Whatever you might have said to me this evening," continued Philip, "if your regard for me had proved to have been quite overthrown—if you had continued to despise me, as you must have done at times—I should still have blessed you, all my life—I should have worshipped you, as the being who opened a new world to me. You

lifted me out of a life of trifling—of trifling which I thought very elegant at the time—trifling with my own time and faculties—trifling with other people's serious business—trifling with something more serious still, I fear—with their feelings. As far as I remember, I thought all this manly and refined enough: and but for you, I should have thought so still. You early opened my eyes to all the meanness and gross selfishness of such a life; and if you were never to let me see you again, I believe I could not fall back into the delusion. But if you will be the guide of my life . . . ."

Margaret sighed deeply. Even at this moment of vital happiness, her thoughts rested on her sister. She remembered what Hester's anticipations had been, in prospect of having Edward for the guide of her life.

"I frighten you, I see," said Philip, "with my confessions: but, be the consequences what they may, I must speak, Margaret. If you despise me, I must do you the justice, and give myself the consolation, of acknowledging what I have been, and what I owe to you."

"It is not that," said Margaret. "Let the past go. Let it be forgotten, in reaching forward to better things. But do not let us be confident about the future. I have seen too much of that. We must not provide for disappointment. Let us leave it till it comes. Surely," she added, with

a gentle smile, "we have enough for the present. I cannot look forward yet."

"How you must have suffered!" cried Philip, in a tone of grief. "You have lost some of your confidence, love. You did not cling to the present, and shrink from the future, when . . . . . O, it is bitter, even now, to think, that while I was working on, in hope and resolution, you were suffering here, making it a duty to extinguish your regard for me, I all the time toiling to deserve it,—and there was no one to set us right, and the whole world in league to divide us."

"That is all over now."

"But not the consequences, Margaret. They have shaken you: they have made you know doubt and fear."

"We are both changed, Philip. We are older, and I trust it will appear that we are wiser than we were. Yes, older. There are times in one's life when days do the work of years; and our days have been of that kind. You have discovered a new life, and my wishes and expectations are much altered. They may not be fewer, or less bright, but they are very different."

"If they were pure from fears . . . . "

"They are pure from fears. At this moment I can fear nothing. We have been brought together by the unquestionable Providence which rules our lives; and this is enough. The present is all right;

and the future, which is to come out of it, will be all right in its way. I have no fear,—but I do not want to anticipate. This hour, with its satisfactions, is all that I can bear."

Notwithstanding this, and Philip's transport in learning it, they did go back, again and again, into the past; and many a glance did they cast into the future. There was no end to their revelations of the circumstances of the last two months, and of the interior history which belonged to them. At last, the burning out of one of the candles startled them into a recollection of how long their conversation had lasted, and of the suspense in which Edward and Hester had been kept. Enderby offered to go and tell them the fact which they must be anticipating: and, after having agreed that no one else should know at present,—that Miss Bruce's name should be allowed to die out of Deerbrook speculations, for Mrs. Rowland's sake, before any other was put in its place, Philip left his Margaret, and went into the breakfast-room, where his presence was not wholly unexpected.

In five minutes, Margaret heard the hall-door shut, and, in another moment, her brother and sister came to her. Hester's face was all smiles and tears: her mind all tumult with the vivid recollection of her own first hours of happy hopeful love, mingled with the griefs which always lay heavy within her, and with that warm attachment

to her sister which circumstances occasionally exalted into a passion.

"We ought to rejoice with nothing but joy, Margaret," said she: "but I cannot see how we are to spare you. I do not believe I can live without you."

Her husband started at this echo of the thoughts for which he was at the moment painfully rebuking himself. He had nothing to say; but gave his greeting in a brotherly kiss, like that which he had offered on his marriage with her sister, and on his entrance upon his home.

"How quiet,—how very quiet she is!" exclaimed Hester, as Margaret left the room, after a few words on the event of the evening, and a calm good-night. "I hope it is all right. I hope she is quite satisfied."

"Satisfied is the word," said her husband. "People are quiet when they are relieved,—calm when they are satisfied:—people like Margaret. It is only great minds, I believe, which feel real satisfaction."

Hester gave him pain by a deep sigh. She was thinking how seldom, and for how short a time, she had ever felt real satisfaction.

"And how often, and for how long," she asked, "do great minds find themselves in that heaven?"

"By the blessing of God, not seldom, I trust," replied he; "though not so often as, by obeying

their nature, they might. Intellectual satisfaction is perhaps not for this world, except in a few of the inspired hours of the Newtons and the Bacons who are sent to teach what the human intellect is. But as often as a great mind meets with full moral sympathy,—as often as it is loved in return for love,—as often as it confides itself unreservedly to the good Power which bestowed its existence, and appointed all its attributes, I imagine it must repose in satisfaction."

"Then satisfaction ought to be no new feeling to Margaret," said Hester. "She always loves every one: she meets with sympathy wherever she turns; and I believe she has faith enough for a martyr, without knowing it. Ought not she,—must not she, have often felt real satisfaction?

"Yes."

"I wonder you dole out your words so sparingly about such a being as Margaret," said Hester, resentfully. "I can tell you, Edward, though you take so coolly the privilege of having such a one so nearly connected with you, you might search the world in vain for her equal. You little know the wealth of her heart and soul, Edward. I ask you whether she does not deserve to feel full satisfaction of conscience and affections, and you just answer 'Yes,' with as much languor as if I had asked you whether the clock has struck eleven yet! I can tell you this,—I have said in my own heart,

and just to Morris, for years, that the happiest man of his generation will be he who has Margaret for a wife: and here you, who ought to know this, give me a grudging 'Yes,' in answer to the first question, arising out of my reverence for Margaret, that I ever asked you!"

"You mistake me," replied Hope, in a tone of gentleness which touched her very soul. "One's words may be restrained by reverence as well as by want of heart. I regard Margaret with a reverence which I should not have thought it necessary to put into words for your conviction."

"O, I am wrong,—as I always am!" cried Hester. "You must forgive me again, as you do far, far too often. But tell me, Edward, ought not Margaret's husband to be the happiest man living?"

"Yes," said Edward, with a smile. "Will that do this time?"

"O, yes, yes," replied she,—the thought passing through her mind that, whether or not her husband excepted himself as a matter of course, she should not have asked a question to which she could not bear all possible answers. Even if he meant that Margaret's husband might be a happier man than himself, it was only too true. As quick as lightning these thoughts passed through her mind, and, apparently without pause, she went on, "And now, as to Enderby,—is he worthy to be this happy husband? Does he deserve her?"

Mr. Hope did pause before he replied,—

"I think we had better dwell as little as we can on that point of the story,—not because I am afraid,—(do not take fright, and suppose I mean more than I say:)—not because I am afraid, but because we can do nothing, discern nothing, about it. Time must show what Enderby is,—or rather, what he has the power of becoming. Meanwhile, the thing is settled. They love and have promised, and are happy. Let us shun all comparison of the one with the other of them, and hope everything from him."

"There will be some amusement," said Hester, after a smiling reverie, "in having this secret to ourselves for a time, while all the rest of Deerbrook is so busy with a different idea and expectation. How *will* Mrs. Rowland bear it?"

"Mrs. Grey might have said that," said Hope, laughing.

"Well, but is it not true? Will it not be very amusing to see the circulation of stories about Miss Bruce, given 'from the best authority;' and to have all manner of news told us about Philip; and to watch how Mrs. Rowland will get out of the scrape she is in? Surely, Edward, you are not above being amused with all this?"

"I shall be best pleased when it is all over. I have lived some years longer than you in Deer-

brook, and have had more time to get tired of its mysteries and mistakes."

"For your comfort, then, it cannot be long before all is open and rightly understood. We need only leave Mrs. Rowland time to extricate herself, I suppose. I wonder how she will manage it."

"We shall be taken by surprise with some clever device, I dare say. It is a pity so much ingenuity should be wasted on mischief."

CHAPTER XI.

A MORNING IN MARCH.

MARGARET was as calm as she appeared to be. To a nature like hers, blissful repose was congenial, and anxiety both appeared and felt unnatural. In her there was no weak wonder that Providence had blessed her as she felt she was blessed. While she suffered, she concluded with certainty that the suffering was for some good purpose: but no degree of happiness took her by surprise, or seemed other than a natural influence shed by the great Parent into the souls of his children. She had of late been fearfully shaken,—not in her faith, but in her serenity. In a moment, this experience appeared like a sick dream, and her present certainty of being beloved spread its calm over her lately-troubled spirit, somewhat as her nightly devotions had done from her childhood upwards. Even now, it was little that she thought of herself: her recovered Philip filled her mind,—he who had been a stranger,—who had been living in a world of which she could conceive nothing,—who had suddenly vanished

from her companionship, as if an earthquake had swallowed him up,—and who was now all her own again, by her side, and to be lived for. Amidst this security, this natural and delightful state of things, that restless uneasiness,—now jealousy, and now self-abasement,—which she had called her own vanity and selfishness, disappeared, and she felt like one who has escaped from the horrors of a feverish bed into the cool fragrant airs and mild sunshine of the early morning. Anxieties soon arose,—gentle doubts expressing themselves in soft sighs,—which were so endeared by the love from which they sprang that she would not have banished them if she could:—anxieties lest she should be insufficient for Philip's happiness,—lest he should overrate the peace of home which she now knew was not to be looked for in full measure there, any more than in other scenes of human probation. Gentle questionings like these there were; but they tended rather to preserve than to disturb her calmness of spirit. Misery had broken her sleep by night, and constrained her conduct by day. Happy love restored her at once to her natural mood, lulling her to the deepest rest when she rested, and rendering her free and self-possessed in all the employments and intercourses of life.

There was one person who must not be kept waiting for this intelligence till Mrs. Rowland's return,—as Margaret told Philip,—and that was

Maria. Philip's heart was now overflowing with kindness towards all whom Margaret loved; and he spoke with strong interest of Maria,—of her virtues, her misfortunes, and the grace and promise which once bloomed in her.

"You knew her before her misfortunes then?"

"To be sure I did:—that was the time when I did know her; for, as you may perceive, there is not much opportunity now. And, besides, she is so totally changed that I do not feel sure that I understand her feelings,—I am too much in awe of them to approach her very nearly. O yes; I knew Maria Young once, much better than I know her now."

"She never told me so. How very strange!"

"Does she ever speak of any other circumstance of her prosperous days?"

"That is true:—only incidentally."

"Time was," said Philip, "when some boyish dreams connected themselves with Maria Young,—only transiently, and quite at the bottom of my own fancy. I never spoke of them to any one before, nor fully acknowledged them to myself. She was the first sensible woman I ever knew,—the first who conveyed to me any conception of what the moral nature of a woman may be, under favourable circumstances. For this I am under great obligations to her; and this is all the feeling that I brought out of our intercourse. It

might possibly have come to more, but that I disliked her father excessively, and left off going there on that account. What a selfish wretch I was in those days! I can hardly believe it now;—but I distinctly remember rejoicing, on hearing of her accident, that my esteem for her had not passed into a warmer feeling, as I should then have suffered so much on her account."

"Is it possible?" cried Margaret, who, in the midst of the unpleasant feeling excited by this fact, did not fail to remark to herself that there could have been no love in such a case.

"I ought, for my own sake, however, Margaret, to say that Maria Young had not the slightest knowledge of her influence over me,—superficial and transient as it was. I never conveyed it to her by word or act; and I am thankful I did not,—for this reason among many,—that I am now perfectly free to show her all the kindness she deserves, both from her own merits, and from her being a beloved friend of yours."

Margaret had no doubt of Philip's full conviction of what he was saying; but she was far from certain that he was not mistaken,—that looks and tones might not have communicated what words and acts had been forbidden to convey. She thought of Maria's silence about her former acquaintance with Philip, of her surprising knowledge of his thoughts and ways, betraying itself

to a vigilant observer through the most trivial conversation, and of her confession that there had been an attachment to some one: and, thinking of these things, her heart melted within her for her friend. She silently resolved upon the only method she could think of, to spare her feelings. She would write the news of this engagement, instead of going to tell it, as she had intended. She was confident that it would be no surprise to Maria; but Maria should have time and solitude in which to reconcile herself to it.

What was to be done about Mrs. Enderby?—She had been told at once, on Philip's arrival, that it was all a mistake about Miss Bruce; and she had appeared relieved when freed from the image of an unknown daughter-in-law. Philip and Margaret agreed that they must deny themselves the pleasure of revealing the rest of the truth to her, till it had been inflicted upon Mrs. Rowland. Mrs. Enderby would never be able to keep it from the Greys; and she would be disturbed and alarmed in the expectation of the scenes which might ensue, when Mrs. Rowland should discover that her brother meant to choose his wife for himself, instead of taking one of her selection. Margaret must go and see his mother as often as possible, but her new interest in her old friend must be concealed for the present. How Margaret, — motherless for so many long

years,—felt her heart yearn towards the old lady, who seemed to be everybody's charge, but whom she felt now to be a sacred object of her care!

The lovers immediately experienced some of the evils attendant on concealment, in the difficulty of meeting as freely as they wished. There was the breakfast-room at Mr. Hope's for them; and, by a little management on the part of brother and sister, a branching off in country walks, out of sight of the good people of Deerbrook. In company, too, they were always together; and without awkwardness. True lovers do not want to talk together in company: they had rather not. It is enough to be in mutual presence; and they have nothing to say at such times, and prefer joining in what everybody else is saying. When Philip had once put a stop to all congratulations about Miss Bruce, by earnestly and most respectfully, though gaily, releasing that lady's name from all connexion with his own, no further awkwardness remained. He treated the affair as one of the false reports which are circulating every day, and left it for his sister to explain how she had been misled by it. It was amusing to the corner-house family to see that Mrs. Grey and Sophia insisted on believing that either Mr. Enderby was a rejected lover of Miss Bruce's, or that it had been an engagement which was now broken off, or that it would soon be an engagement. The

gay state of Enderby's spirits accorded best with the latter supposition; but this gaiety might be assumed, to cover his mortification. Margaret was daily made a listener to one or other of these suppositions.

One bright, mild, March day, Hester and Margaret were accompanying Philip to Mr. Rowland's, to call on Mrs. Enderby, when they met Mr. Rowland in the street,—returned the evening before from Cheltenham.

"Ladies, your most obedient!" said he, stopping up the path before them. "I was on my way to call on you; but if you will step in to see Mrs. Enderby, we can have our chat there." And he at once offered his arm to Margaret, bestowing a meaning smile on Hester. As soon as they were fairly on their way, he entered at once on the compliments it had been his errand to pay, but spoke for himself alone.

"I did not write," said he, "because I expected to deliver my good wishes in person so soon; but they are not the less hearty for being a little delayed. I find, however, that I am still beforehand with my neighbours, — that even Mrs. Enderby does not know, nor my partner's family. All in good time: but I am sorry for this mistake about the lady. It is rather awkward. I do not know where Mrs. Rowland got her information, or what induced her to rely so implicitly upon it.

All I can say is, that I duly warned her to be sure of her news before she regularly announced it. But I believe such reports,—oftener unfounded than true,—have been the annoyance of young people ever since there has been marriage and giving in marriage. We have all suffered in our turn, I dare say, though the case is not always so broad an one as this.—Come, Mr. Philip, what are you about? Standing there, and keeping the ladies standing! and I do believe you have not knocked. Our doors do not open of themselves, though it be to let in the most welcome guests in the world.—Now, ladies, will you walk in? Philip will prepare Mrs. Enderby to expect you upstairs; and, meanwhile, let me show you what a splendid jonquil we have in blow here."

The day was so mild, and the sun shone into the house so pleasantly, that Mrs. Enderby had been permitted to leave her chamber, and establish herself for the day in the drawing-room. There she was found in a flutter of pleasure at the change of scene. Matilda's canary sang in the sunshine; Philip had filled the window with flowering plants for his mother, and the whole room was fragrant with his hyacinths. The little Greys had sent Mrs. Enderby a bunch of violets; Phœbe had made bold, while the gardener was at breakfast, to abstract a bough from the almond tree on the grass; and its pink blossoms now decked the

mantel-piece. These things were almost too much for the old lady. Her black eyes looked rather too bright, and her pale thin face twitched when she spoke. She talked a great deal about the goodness of everybody to her, and said it was almost worth while being ever so ill to find one's-self so kindly regarded. It rejoiced her to see her friends around her again in this way. It was quite a meeting of friends again. If only her dear Priscilla, and the sweet children, had been here!—it was a great drawback, certainly, their being away, but she hoped they would soon be back; if they had been here, there would have been nothing left to wish. Hester asked if Mr. Hope had visited her this morning. She had rather expected to meet him here, and had brought something for him which he had wished very much to have,—a letter from his brother in India. She was impatient till it was in his hands. Had he made his call, or might she expect him presently? Mrs. Enderby seemed to find difficulty in comprehending the question; and then she could not recollect whether Mr. Hope had paid his visit this morning or not. She grew nervous at her own confusion of mind,—talked faster than ever; and, at last, when the canary sang out a sudden loud strain, she burst into tears.

"We are too much for her," said Hester; "let us go; we have been very wrong."

"Yes, go," said Philip, "and send Phœbe. You will find your way into the garden, and I will join you there presently. Rowland, you will go with them."

Margaret cast a beseeching look at Philip, and he gratefully permitted her to stay. Hester carried off the canary. Margaret drew down the blinds, and then kneeled by Mrs. Enderby, soothing and speaking cheerfully to her, while tears, called up by a strange mixture of emotions, were raining down her cheeks. Philip stood by the mantelpiece, weeping without restraint; the first time that Margaret had ever seen tears from him.

"I am a silly old woman," said Mrs. Enderby, half-laughing in the midst of her sobs. "Here comes Phœbe—Phœbe, I have been very silly, and I hardly know what about, I declare. My dear!" she exclaimed, as she felt tears drop upon the hand which Margaret was chafing,—"my dear Miss Ibbotson—"

"O! call me Margaret!"

"But, my dear, I am afraid there is something the matter, after all. Something has happened."

"O, dear! no, ma'am," said Phœbe. "Only we don't like to see you in this way."

"There is nothing the matter, I assure you," said Margaret. "We were too much for you; we tired you; and we are very sorry,—that is all. But the room will be kept quite quiet now, and you will soon feel better."

"I am better, my dear, thank you. How are you sitting so low? Bless me! you are kneeling. Pray, my dear, rise. To think of your kneeling to take care of me!"

"Give me one kiss, and I will rise," said Margaret, bending over her. It was a hearty kiss which Mrs. Enderby gave her, for the old lady put all her energy into it. Margaret rose satisfied; she felt as if she had been accepted for a daughter.

As soon as Mrs. Enderby appeared disposed to shut her eyes and lie quiet, Philip and Margaret withdrew, leaving her to Phœbe's care. Arm-in-arm they sauntered about the walks, till they came upon Hester and Mr. Rowland, who were sitting in the sun, under the shelter of an evergreen hedge.

"Have you heard nothing of my husband yet?" asked Hester. "I do wish he would come, and read this letter from Frank."

"Her anxiety is purely disinterested," said Margaret to Philip. "There can be nothing about her in that letter. His greetings to her will come in the next."

"Edward enjoys Frank's letters above everything," observed Hester.

"Suppose you go in next door, and we will send Hope to you when he comes," said Philip, intending thus to set Mr. Rowland free, to dismiss Hester, and have Margaret to himself for a garden walk.

"The Greys are all out for the day," observed Mr. Rowland; "my partner and all; and this must be my excuse to you, ladies, for wishing you a good morning. There is a lighter at the wharf down there, whose lading waits for me."

"Ay, go," said Philip; "we have detained you long enough. We will find our way by some means into the Greys' grounds, and amuse ourselves there. If you will bid one of your people call us when Hope comes, we shall hear."

By the help of an overturned wheelbarrow, and some activity, and at the expense of a very little detriment to the hedge, the ladies were presently landed on Mr. Grey's territories. By common consent, the three directed their steps towards the end of the green walk, whence might be seen the prospect of which the sisters were never tired. A purple and golden crocus peeped up here and there from the turf of this walk; there was a wilderness of daffodils on either side, the blossoms just bursting from their green sheaths; the periwinkle, with its starry flowers and dark shining sprays, overran the borders; and the hedge which bounded the walk was red with swollen buds. As the gazers leaned on this close-clipped, compact hedge, they overlooked a wide extent of country. They stood on a sort of terrace, and below them was the field where the Greys' pet animals were wont to range. The old pony trotted towards

the terrace, as if expecting notice. Fanny's and Mary's lambs approached and looked up, as awaiting something good. Philip amused himself and them with odd noises, but had nothing better for them; and so they soon scampered off, the pony throwing out his hind legs as if in indignation at his bad entertainment. Beyond this field, a few white cottages, in the rear of the village, peeped out from the lanes, and seemed to sit down to rest in the meadows, so profound was the repose which they seemed to express. The river wound quietly through the green level, filling its channel, and looking pearly under the light spring sky; and behind it the woods uprose, their softened masses and outlines prophesying of leafy summer shades. Near at hand the air was alive with twitterings: afar off, nature seemed asleep, and nothing was seen to move but the broad sail of a wherry, and a diminished figure of a man beside his horse, bush-harrowing in a distant green field.

Hester judged rightly that the lovers would like to have this scene to themselves; and having surveyed it with that sigh of delight with which spring causes the heart to swell, she softly stole away, and sauntered down the green walk. She proceeded till she reached a bench, whence she could gaze upon the grey old church tower, rising between the intervening trees, and at the same time overlook Mr. Rowland's garden. She had not sat

many minutes before her husband leaped the hedge, and bounded over the grass towards her.

"What news?" cried he. "There is good news in your face."

"There is good news in my bag, I trust." And she produced the large square epistle, marked "Ship letter" in those red characters which have a peculiar power of making the heart beat. She did not wonder that her husband changed colour as she held up the letter. She knew that the arrival of news from Frank was a great event in life to Edward. She gloried in being, for the first time, the medium through which this rare pleasure reached him; and she longed to share, for the first time, the confidence of a brother. Margaret had for some months reposed upon the possession of a brother: she was now to have the same privilege. She made room upon the bench for her husband, and proposed to lose no time in reading the letter together. But Hope did not sit down, though, from his agitation, she would have supposed him glad of a seat. He said he would read in the shrubbery, and walked slowly away, breaking the seal as he went. Hester was rather disconcerted; but she suppressed her disappointment, begged him to take advantage of the bench, and herself retired into the orchard while he read his epistle. There, as she stood apparently amusing herself by the pond, wiping away a tear or two which would

have way, she little imagined what agony her husband was enduring from this letter, which she was supposing must make his heart overflow with pleasure. The letter was half full of reply to Edward's account of Margaret, in his epistle of last June,—of raillery about her, of intreaty that Edward would give him such a sister-in-law, and of intimations that nothing could be more apparent than that the whole rich treasure of his heart's love was Margaret's own. Hope's soul sickened as he read, with that deadly sickness which he had believed was past: but last June, with its delights and opening love, was too suddenly, and too vividly, re-awakened in his memory and imagination. The Margaret of yesterday, of last month, he trusted he had arrived at regarding as a sister: not so the Margaret of last summer. In vain he repeated, again and again, to himself that he had expected this,—that he always knew it must come,—that this was the very thing, and no more, that he had been dreading for half a year past,—that it was over now,—that he ought to rejoice that he held in his hand the last witness and reminder of the mistake of his life. In vain did he repeat to himself these reasonable things,—these satisfactory truths. They did not still the throbbing of his brain, or relieve the agony of his spirit;—an agony under which he could almost have cursed the hilarity of his brother as levity, and his hearty

affection as cruel mockery. He recovered some breath and composure when he read the latter half of Frank's volume of communication; and, before he had finished it, the sound of distant footsteps fell upon his excited ear. He knew they were coming,—the three who would be full of expectation as to what he should have to tell them from India. It was they, walking very slowly, as if waiting for the news.

"Come!" said he, starting up, and going to meet them. "Now, to the green walk,—we shall be quiet there,—and I will read you all about Frank."

He did read them all about Frank,—all the last half of the letter,—Hester hanging on his arm, and Philip and Margaret listening, as if they were taking in their share of family news. When it was done, and some one said it was time to be turning homewards, Hope disengaged his arm from Hester, and ran off, saying that he would report of Mrs. Enderby to Mr. Rowland in the office, and meet them before they should be out of the shrubbery. He did so: but he first took his way round by a fence which was undergoing the operation of tarring, thrust Frank's letter into the fire over which the tar was heating, and saw every inch of it consumed before he proceeded. When he regained his party, Hester took his arm, and turned once more towards the shrubbery, saying,

"We have plenty of time, and I am not at all tired: so now read me the rest."

"My love, I have read you all I can."

Hester stopped short, and with flashing eyes, whose fire was scarcely dimmed by her tears, cried,

"Do you mean to give me no more of your confidence than others? Is your wife . . . . ."

"My dear, it is not my confidence: it is Frank's."

"And is not Frank my brother? He is nothing to them."

"He was not your brother when this letter was written, nor did he know that he should ever be so. Consider this letter as one of old time,—as belonging to the antiquity of our separate lives. I hope there will never be another letter from Frank, or anybody else, (out of the range of my professional affairs,) whose contents will not be as much yours as mine. This must satisfy you now, Hester; for I can tell you no more. This ought to satisfy you."

"It does not satisfy me. I never will be satisfied with giving all, and having nothing in return. I have given you all. Not a thought has there been in my heart about Margaret, from the day we married, that I have not imparted to you. Has it not been so?"

"I believe it, and I thank you for it."

"And what is it to you to have a sister,—you

who have always had sisters,—what is it to you, in comparison with my longing to have a brot her? And now you make him no more mine than he is Margaret's and Philip's. He himself, if he has the heart of a brother, would cry out upon you for disappointing me."

"I can allow for your feelings, Hester. I have known too well what disappointment is, not to feel for you. But here the fault is not mine."

"Whose is it then? It is to be charged upon Providence, I suppose, like most of our evils."

"No, Hester; I charge it upon you. The disappointment was unavoidable; but the sting of it lies in yourself. You are unreasonable. It is at your own request that I remind you to be reasonable."

"And when was that request made? When I believed that you would hold me your friend,—that no others were to come near my place in your confidence,—that all you cared for was to be equally mine,—that your brother himself was to be my brother. It was when you promised me these things that I put my conscience and my feelings into your charge. But now all that is over. You are as much alone in your own soul as ever, and I am thrust out from it as if you were like other men. . . . O!" she cried, covering her face with her hands, "call me your housekeeper at once,—for I am not your wife,—and breathe not upon my

conscience,—look not into my heart,—for what are they to you? I re-claim from you, as your servant, the power I gave you over my soul, when I supposed I was to be your wife."

"Now you must hear me, Hester. Sit down; for you cannot stand under the tempest of your own feelings.—Now, what are the facts out of which all this has arisen? I have had a letter, written before we were known to be engaged, containing something which is confided to my honour. We had both rather that such had not been the case. Would you now have me violate my honour? Let us have done. The supposition is too ridiculous."

"But the manner," pleaded Hester. "It is not curiosity about the letter. I care nothing if it contained the affairs of twenty nations. But, O! your manner was cruel. If you loved me as you once did, you could not treat me exactly as you treat Margaret and Philip. You do not love me as you once did. . . . You do not answer me," she continued, in a tone of wretchedness. "Nay, do not answer me now. It will not satisfy me to hear you say upon compulsion that you love me.—Ah! I had Margaret once: and once I had you. Philip has taken my Margaret from me; and if you despise me, I will lie down and die."

"Fear not!" said Hope, with great solemnity. "While I live you shall be honoured, and have

such rest as you will allow to your own heart. But do you not see that you have now been distrusting me,—not I you? Shall I begin to question whether you love me? Could you complain of injustice if I did, when you have been tempting my honour, insulting my trust in you, and wounding my soul? Is this the love you imagine I cannot estimate and return? This is madness, Hester. Rouse yourself from it. Waken up the most generous part of yourself. We shall both have need of it all."

"O God! what do you intend? Consider again, before you break my heart, if you mean to say that we must . . . Edward! forgive me, Edward!"

"I mean to say that we must support each other under troubles of God's sending, instead of creating woes of our own."

"Support each other! Thank Heaven!"

"I see how your spirit rouses itself at the first sound of threatening from without. I knew it would. Rough and trying times are coming, love, and I must have your support. Trouble is coming,—daily and hourly annoyance, and no end of it that I can see:—and poverty, perhaps, instead of the ease to which we looked forward when you married me. I do not ask you whether you can bear these things, for I know you can. I shall look to you to help me to keep my temper."

"Are you not mocking me?" doubtfully whispered Hester.

"No, my love," her husband replied, looking calmly in her face. "I know you to be a friend made for adversity."

"Let it come, then!" exclaimed she. And she felt herself on the threshold of a new life, in which all the past might yet be redeemed.

They soon rejoined Margaret, and went home to relate and to hear what new threats the day had disclosed.

CHAPTER XII.

DEERBROOK COMMOTIONS.

Among many vague threats, there was one pretty definite menace which had encountered Hope from various quarters of late. By whose agency, and by what means, he did not know, but he apprehended a design to supplant him in his practice. There was something more meant than that Mr. Foster from Blickley appeared from time to time in the village. Hope imagined that there was a looking forward to somebody else, who was to cure all maladies as soon as they appeared, and keep death at a distance from Deerbrook. It seemed to be among the poor people chiefly that such an expectation prevailed. Philip was sure that Mr. Rowland knew nothing of it, nor Mrs. Enderby. Mr. Grey, when spoken to, did not believe it, but would quietly and discreetly inquire. Mrs. Grey was sure that the Deerbrook people would not venture to discountenance altogether any one who had married into their connexion so decidedly. Her young folks were to hear nothing of the matter, as

it would not do to propagate an idea which might bring about its own accomplishment.

At the alms-houses to-day, the threat had been spoken plainly enough; and Hope had found his visit there a very unpleasant one. It had been wholly disagreeable. When within a mile and a half of the houses, a stone had been thrown at him from behind a hedge. It narrowly missed him. A little further on, there was another, from the opposite side of the road. This indication was not to be mistaken. Hope leaped his horse over a gate, and rode about the field, to discover who had attacked him. For some time he could see no one; but, on looking more closely to the fence, he saw signs in one part that hedging was going on. As he approached the spot, a labourer rose up from the ditch, and was suddenly very busy at his work. He looked stupid, and denied having thrown any stones, but admitted that there was nobody else in the field that he knew of.—Further on, more stones were thrown: it was evidently a conspiracy; but Hope could find no one to call to account for it but an old woman in one case, and two boys in another.—As he rode up to the alms-houses, the aged inmates came out to their doors, or looked from their fanciful Gothic windows, with every indication of displeasure in their faces and manner. The old women shook their heads at him, and some their fists; the old men shook their sticks at him. He stopped to speak to one man of

eighty-three, who was sitting in the sun at his door; but he could get no answer out of him, —nothing but growls about the doctor being a pretty doctor not to have mended his patient's eye-sight yet. Not a bit better could he see now than he could a year ago, with all the doctoring he had had: and now the gentleman would not try anything more! A pretty doctor indeed! But it would not be long before there would be another who would cure poor people's eyes as if they were rich: and poor people's eyes were as precious to them as rich people's.—He next went into a house where an aged woman was confined to bed with rheumatism; but her gossips stopped him in the middle of the room, and would not let him approach her, for fear he should be her death. As she had been lying awake the night before, she had heard her deceased husband's shoes dance of their own accord in the closet; and this was a sign that something was going to happen to somebody. She thought of the doctor at the time, and prayed that he might be kept from coming near her; for she knew he would be the death of her, somehow, as he had been of other folks. So Hope was obliged to leave her and her rheumatism to the gossips.—The particular object of his visit to the place to-day, however, was a little girl, a grandchild of one of the pensioners, admitted by special favour into the establishment. This girl had small-pox, and her case was a severe one. Hope was admitted with

unwillingness even to her, and was obliged to assume his ultimate degree of peremptoriness of manner with her nurses. He found her muffled up about the head with flannel, and with a slice of fat bacon, folded in flannel, tied about her throat, —a means considered a specific for small-pox in some regions. The discarding of the flannel and bacon, of course caused great offence; and there was but too much reason to fear that all his directions, as to the management of the girl, would be observed by contraries, the moment his back was turned. He had long ago found explanation and argument to be useless. All that he could do was, to declare authoritatively, that if his directions were not followed, the girl would die, and her death would lie at the door of her nurses; that, in that case, he expected some of the people about her would be ill after her; but that, if he was obeyed, he trusted she might get through, and nobody else be the worse. Almost before he was out of the house, another slice of fat bacon was cut, and the flannels put to the fire to heat again.

Hope mounted his horse to depart, just at the hour when the labourers were at their dinners in all the cottages around. They poured out to stare at him, some shouting that they should not have him long to look at, as they would get a better doctor soon. Some sent their dogs yelping at his horse's heels, and others vented wrath or jokes about

church-yards. Soon after he had left the noise behind him, he met Sir William Hunter, riding, attended by his groom. Hope stopped him, making it his apology that Sir William might aid in saving the life of a patient in whom he was much interested. He told the story of the small-pox, of the rural method of treating it, with which he had to contend, and proposed that Sir William should use his influence in securing for the patient a fair chance for her life. Sir William listened coolly, would certainly call at the alms-houses and make inquiry; did not like to interfere with the notions of the people there; made a point indeed of leaving them pretty much to their own ways; owned that it would be a pity the girl should die, if she really might be got through; would call therefore, and inquire, and see whether Lady Hunter could not send down anything from the Hall. He smiled rather incredulously when assured that it was not anything that could be sent down from the Hall that was wanted by the patient, but only the use of the fresh air that was about her, and the observance of her doctor's simple directions. Sir William next began to make his horse fidget, and Hope took the hint.

"This has been my business with you at present," said he. "At some more convenient time, I should be glad of a little conversation with you on other matters connected with these alms-houses."

Sir William Hunter bowed, put spurs to his horse, and gallopped off, as if life or death depended on his reaching the Hall in three minutes and a half.

These hints of "another doctor"—"a better doctor"—"a new man"—met Hope in other directions. Mrs. Howell was once quoted as a whisperer of the fact; and the milliner's young lady was known to have speculated on whether the new doctor would prove to be a single man. No one turned away from such gossip with more indifference than Hope: but it came to him in the form of inquiries which he was supposed best able to answer. He now told Hester of them all; warned her of the probable advent of a rival practitioner; and at the same time urged upon her a close economy in the management of the house, as his funds were rapidly failing. If his practice continued to fall off as it was now doing, he scarcely saw how they were to keep up their present mode of living. It grieved him extremely to have to say this to his wife in the very first year of their marriage. He had hoped to have put larger means in her power, from year to year; but at present he owned his way was far from being clear. They had already descended to having no prospect at all.

For all this Hester cared little. She had never known the pinchings of poverty, any more than the embarrassments of wealth. She could not

conceive of such a thing as being very anxious about what they should eat, and what they should drink, and wherewith they should be clothed; though, if she had looked more narrowly at her own imaginations of poverty, she would perhaps have discovered on the visionary table always a delicate dish for her husband—in the wardrobe, always a sleek black coat—and in his waiting-room, a clear fire in winter; while the rest of the picture was made up of bread and vegetables, and shabby gowns for herself, and devices to keep herself warm without burning fuel. Her imagination was rather amused than alarmed with anticipations of this sort of poverty. It was certainly not poverty that she dreaded. A more serious question was, how she could bear to see her husband supplanted, and, in the eyes of others, disgraced. This question the husband and wife now often asked each other, and always concluded by agreeing that time must show.

The girl at the alms-houses died in a fortnight. Some pains were taken to conceal from the doctor the time and the precise spot of her burial—points which the doctor never thought of inquiring about, and of which it was therefore easy to keep him in ignorance. A few of the neighbouring cottagers agreed to watch the grave for ten nights, to save the body from the designs of evil surgeons. One of the watchers reported, after the seventh night,

that he had plainly heard a horse coming along the road, and that he rather thought it stopped opposite the churchyard. He had raised himself up, and coughed aloud, and that was no doubt the reason why nobody came: the horse must have turned back and gone away, whoever might be with it. This put people on the watch; and on the eighth night two men walked about the churchyard. They had to tell that they once thought they had caught the doctor in the fact. They had both heard a loud whistle, and had stood to see what would come of it (they could see very well, for it had dawned some time). A person came through the turnstile with a sack, which seemed to leave his intentions in no doubt. They hid themselves behind two opposite trees, and both sprang out upon him at once: but it was only the miller's boy on his way to the mill. On the ninth and tenth nights nothing happened; the neighbours began to feel the want of their regular sleep; and the querulous grandmother, who seemed more angry that they meant to leave the poor girl's body to itself now, than pleased that it had been watched at all, was compelled to put up with assurances that doctors were considered to wish to cut up bodies within the first ten days, if at all, and were not apt to meddle with them afterwards.

It was full three weeks from this time when Hope was sent for to the alms-houses, after a

longer interval than he had ever known to elapse without the old folks having some complaint to make. The inmate who was now ill was the least aged, and the least ignorant and unreasonable person, in the establishment. He was grateful to Hope for having restored him from a former illness; and, though now much shaken in confidence, had enough remaining to desire extremely to see his old friend, when he found himself ill and in pain. His neighbours wondered at him for wishing to court destruction, by putting himself again into the hands of the suspicious doctor: but he said he could have no ease in his mind, and was sure he should never get well, till he saw the gentleman's face again; and he engaged an acquaintance to go to Deerbrook and summon him. This acquaintance spread the fact of his errand along the road as he went; and therefore, though Hope took care to choose his time, so as not to ride past the cottage-doors while the labourers were at dinner, his visit was not more private or agreeable than on the preceding occasion.

The first symptom of his being expected on the road was, that Sir William Hunter, riding, as before, with his groom behind him, fell in with Hope, evidently by design.

Sir William Hunter's visit to the alms-houses had produced the effect of making him acquainted with the discontents of the people, and had

afforded him a good opportunity of listening to their complaints of their surgeon, without being troubled with the answers. Since the election, he had been eager to hear whatever could be said against Hope, whose vote, given contrary to Sir William's example and influence, was regarded by the baronet as an unpardonable impertinence.

"So you lost your patient down there, I find," said Sir William, rudely. "The girl slipped through your fingers, after all. However, I did my duty by you. I told the people they ought to allow you a fair chance."

"I requested your interference on the girl's account, and not on my own," said Hope. "But as you allude to my position among these people, you will allow me to ask, as I have for some time intended, whether you are aware of the treatment to which I am subjected, in your neighbourhood and among your dependants?"

"I find you are not very popular hereabouts, indeed, sir," replied the baronet, with a half-smile, which was immediately reflected in the face of the groom.

"With your leave, we will have our conversation to ourselves," said Hope.

The baronet directed his groom to ride on slowly. Hope continued,—

"The extreme ignorance of the country people has caused some absurd stories against me to be

circulated and believed. If those who are not in this state of extreme ignorance will do me justice, and give me, as you say, a fair chance, I have no fear but that I shall live down calumnies, and, by perseverance in my professional duty, recover the station I lately held here. This justice, this fair chance, I claim, Sir William, from all who have the intelligence to understand the case, and rightly observe my conduct. I have done my best in the service of these pensioners of yours; and excuse my saying that I must be protected in the discharge of my duty."

"Ay, there's the thing, Mr. Hope. That can't be done, you see. If the people do not like you, why then the only thing is for you to stay away."

"Then what is to become of the sick?"

"Ay, there's the thing, Mr. Hope. If they do not like one, you see, why then they must try another. That is what we have been thinking. Now, if you take my advice, you will not go forward to-day. You will repent it if you do, depend upon it. They do not like you, Mr. Hope."

"I need no convincing of that. You do not seem disposed to stir, Sir William, to improve the state of things; so I will go and try what I can do by myself."

"I advise you not, sir.—Mr. Hope!" shouted Sir William, as Hope rode rapidly forward, "take care what you are about. They do not

want to see you again. The consequences may be serious."

'And this man is a magistrate, and he fancies himself my patron!' thought Hope, as he rode on. 'He wants me to throw up the appointment; but I will not, till I see that the poor old creatures can be consigned to care as good as my own. If he chooses to dismiss me, he may,—though we can ill afford the loss just now.'

For one moment he had thought of turning back, as Sir William's caution had seemed to foretell some personal risk in proceeding; but the remembrance of Hester's parting look inspired him afresh. Instead of the querulous anxiety which had formerly harassed him from its groundlessness and apparent selfishness, it was now an anxiety worthy of the occasion that flushed her cheek. So far from entreating him to remain with her, she had bidden him go where his duty led him. She had calculated the probable length of his absence, and the watch was laid on the table as formerly: but she had used the utmost expedition in sewing on the ring of his umbrella, and had kissed her hand to him from the window with a smile. He would not return to her without having fully discharged his errand. 'She might be a soldier's or sailor's wife, after all,' thought he.

The hours of his absence were indeed very anxious ones to the family at home. For nearly

two hours, the sisters amused themselves and one another as well as they could; but it was a great relief when Philip came in. He would not believe anything they said, however, about their reasons for fear. It was nonsense—it was Deerbrook talk. What harm could a dozen old men and women, at almost a hundred years apiece, do to Hope?—and the country people, the labourers round,—they had their own business to attend to: they would just swear an oath at him, and let him pass; and if they ventured to lay a finger on his bridle, Hope knew how to use his whip. He would come home and get his dinner, and be very dull, they would see, from having nothing to tell.—Before Philip had finished his picture of the dull dining they might expect, Morris entered, and shut the door before she came forward to the table and spoke. She said she did not like to make mysteries, out of fear of frightening people; and she hoped there would be nothing to be really afraid of now: but if Mr. Enderby thought he could contrive to meet her master out on the road, and get him to leave his horse somewhere, and come walking home by Turnstile Lane, she thought it would be best, and save some bad language, at least. Charles had brought in word that people,—angry people,—were gathering at the other end of the street, and her master could quite disappoint them by coming home on foot the back way.—How many angry

people were there?—and what sort of people?—They were mostly countrymen out of the places round,—more of those than of Deerbrook folks. There were a good many of them,—so many as nearly to block up the street at one part. If the ladies would step up into the boy's attic, they would see something of what was going on, from the little window there, without being seen.

Philip snatched his hat, and said he would soon bring them news. He hoped they would go up to the attic, and amuse themselves with the show: for a mere show it would end in being, he was confident. He observed, however, that it would be as well to keep Charles at home, in case, as was possible, of a messenger being wanted. He himself should soon be back.

Charles was called up into the drawing-room, and questioned. Never before having been of so much importance, he was very grand in his statements, and made the most of all he had to say. Still, however, it was a story which no telling could have made other than an unpleasant one. Some of the people who had come in from the country had pitchforks. Two or three of the shopkeepers had put up their shutters. Many strangers were in the churchyard, peeping about the new graves: and others had set scouts on the road, to give notice when master was coming. Mrs. Plumstead was very busy scolding the people

all round; but it did not do any good; for they only laughed at her.

"You may go, Charles; but do not set foot out of the house till you are bid," said Hester, when she found the boy had told all he knew, and perhaps something more. Morris left the room with him, in order to keep her eye upon him.

"O, Margaret, this is very terrible!" said Hester.

"Most disagreeable. We must allow something for Charles's way of telling the story. But yet —— is there anything we can do, Hester?"

"Mr. Grey will surely be here, presently. Do not you think so?"

"Either he or Mr. Rowland, no doubt."

"Dr. Levitt is a magistrate: but this is Saturday, and he is so deep in his sermon, he could not be made to understand and believe till it would be too late.—Do you go up to the attic, Margaret, and I will keep the hall-door. I shall hear his horse sooner than any one, and I shall stand ready to open to him in an instant. Hark now!"

It was only the boy with the post-bags, trotting slowly to Mrs. Plumstead's, amusing himself by the way with observations on the unusual animation of Deerbrook.

"It is too soon yet, by half an hour," said Margaret. "He cannot possibly be here for this half hour, I think. Do not wear yourself out with

standing in the hall so long. I must just say one thing, love.—I fear all kinds of danger less for Edward than for almost any one else in the world: he does always what is most simple and right; and I think he could melt anybody's heart, if he tried."

"Thank you," said Hester, gratefully. "I agree and trust with you: but what hearts have these people? or, how can you get at them, through such heads! But yet he will triumph, I feel."

When Margaret went up-stairs to the attic window, Hester moved a chair into the hall, softly opened the window a little, to facilitate her hearing whatever passed outside, and took her seat by it, listening intently. There was soon but too much to listen to. Shuffling feet multiplied about the door; and some of the grumbling voices seemed to come from men who had stationed themselves on the steps. Hester rose, and, with the utmost care to avoid noise, put up the chain of the house-door. While she was doing this, Morris came from the kitchen, for the same purpose. She feared there was an intention to surround the house: she wished her master would keep away, for a few hours at least: she could not think where all the gentlemen of the place were, that they did not come and see after her young ladies. Before the words were uttered, there was a loud

rap at the door. Morris made her mistress keep back, while she found out who it was, before letting down the chain. Hester knew it was not her husband's knock; and it turned out to be Mr. Grey's. Margaret came flying down, and they all exclaimed how glad they were to see him.

"I wish I could do you any good," said he: "but this is really a sad business, my dears."

"Have you heard anything, sir?"

"Nothing about your husband. Enderby bade me tell you that he is gone out to meet him, and to stir up Sir William Hunter, who may be said to be the cause of all this, inasmuch as he never attempted to stop the discontent when he might. But that unlucky vote, my dear,—that was much to be deplored."

"No use casting that up now, surely," observed Morris.

"Yes, Morris, there is," said her mistress; "it gives me an opportunity of saying that I glory in the vote; and I would have my husband give it again to-day, if he had to pass through yonder crowd to go up to the poll."

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Grey, "be prudent. Do not urge your husband on into danger: he has quite enthusiasm enough without; and you see what comes of it.—But I am here to say that my wife hopes you and Margaret will retire to our house, if you can get round without bringing any

of these troublesome people with you. We think you might slip out from the surgery, and along the lane, and through the Rowlands' garden-door, and over the hedge which they tell me you managed to climb one day lately for pleasure. By this way, you might reach our house without any one being the wiser."

"On no account whatever," said Hester. "I shall not leave home, under any circumstances."

"You are very kind," said Margaret; "but we are expecting my brother every moment."

"But he will follow you by the same road."

Both wife and sister were sure he would do no such thing. They thought the kindest thing Mr. Grey could do would be to go out the back way, and see that the constable was kept up to his duty. He promised to do so, and that he would speak to Dr. Levitt, to have some of Grey and Rowland's men sworn in as special constables, if such a measure should appear to be desirable.

"I do not know how to believe all this now," said Margaret; "it seems so causeless and ridiculous! In Birmingham we could never have given credit to the story of such a riot about nothing."

Morris was not sure of this. In large towns there were riots sometimes for very small matters, or on account of entire mistakes. She had always heard that one of the worst things about living in

a village is, that when the people once get a wrong idea into their heads, there is no getting it out again; and that they will even be violent upon it against all reason; but such things she knew to happen occasionally in towns.

Another knock. It was Mr. Rowland, and Hester's heart turned sick at there being no news of her husband. Mr. Rowland had every expectation, of course, that Mr. Hope would be quite safe, and that this would turn out a disturbance of very slight consequence: but he would just ask whether it would not be advisable to close the window-shutters. If stones should find their way into the parlours, it might be disagreeable to the ladies.—There was no doubt of that: but would not closing the shutters be a hint to the people outside to throw stones?—Well, perhaps so. He only thought he would offer the suggestion, and see if he could be of any service to the ladies.

"Morris, go up to the attic and watch; and Margaret, do you stay here. Yes, Mr. Rowland," said Hester, fixing her glorious eyes full on him; "you can be of service to us, if my husband outlives this day. You ought to pray that he may; for if not, it is your wife who has murdered him."

Mr. Rowland turned as pale as ashes.

"We know well that you have no share in all

this injury: we believe that you respect my husband, and have friendly feelings towards us all. I will spare you what I might say,—what Mrs. Rowland should sink to the earth to hear, if she were standing where you stand. I look upon you as no enemy . . . ."

"You do me only justice," said Mr. Rowland, leaning upon the chair which Hester had brought for herself.

"I wish to do you justice; and therefore I warn you that if you do not procure complete protection for my husband,—not only for this day, but for the future;—if you do not cause your wife to retract her slanders . . . ."

"Stop, Mrs. Hope! this is going too far," said Mr. Rowland, drawing himself up, and putting on an air of offended dignity.

"It is not going too far. You cannot, you dare not, pretend to be offended with what I say, when you know that my noble husband has been injured in his character and his prospects, attacked in his domestic peace, and now exposed to peril of his life, by the falsehoods your wife has told. I tell you that we do not impute her crimes to you. If this is justice, you will prove it by doing your full duty to my husband. If you decline any part of this duty,—if you countenance her slanders,—if you shrink from my husband's side in whatever we may have to go through,—if you do not either

compel your wife to do us right, or do it yourself in opposition to her,—you are her partner in guilt, as well as in life and lot."

"Consider what a situation you place me in!—But what would you have me do?"

"I would have you see that every false charge she has brought is retracted,—every vile insinuation recanted. You must make her say everywhere that my husband has not stolen dead bodies; that he is not a plotter against the peace and order of society; that he has not poisoned a child by mistake, or cut off a sound limb for the sake of practice and amusement. Your wife has said these things, and you know it; and you must make her contradict them all."

"Consider what a situation you place me in!" said Mr. Rowland again.

"Be generous, Hester!" said Margaret.

"Do not trample on a wretched man!" cried Mr. Rowland, covering his face with his hands.

"'Consider!' 'Be generous!'" exclaimed Hester, in a softened tone. "I might well say, Consider what a situation my husband is placed in! and that I must see justice done to him before I can be generous to others; but I have such a husband that I can afford to spare the wretched, and be generous to the humbled. Go, now, and do *your* duty by us: and the next time you hear your wife say that we do not love and

are not happy, tell her that if we forbear to crush her, it is because we are too strong for her,—too strong in heart, however weak in fortunes: —because we are strong in a peace which she cannot poison, and a love which she will never understand."

Even at a moment like this, and while feeling that she could not have said the things that Hester said, Margaret's eyes swam in tears of joy. Here was her sister, in a moment of that high excitement when nothing but truth ventures upon utterance, acknowledging herself blest in peace which could not be poisoned, and love which the vile could not understand. The day, whatever might be its events, was worth enduring for this.

Mr. Rowland walked once or twice up and down the hall, wiped his brows, and then, evidently unable to endure Hester's presence, said he would let himself out, and there await Mr. Hope's arrival, or anything else that might occur.

O! would he ever come? It seemed to Hester like a week since she had given him his umbrella, and seen him ride away.

Hark! Surely this must be,—it certainly was his horse this time. Yes,—there was Morris calling from the stairs that her master was fighting his way down the street! There was Charles giving notice that the crowd was running round from the back to the front of the house! There

was the noise among the people outside, the groaning, the cries!

"Now, ma'am!" said Morris, breathless with the haste she had made down stairs. Morris supposed her mistress would softly let down the chain, open the door just wide enough for Hope to slip in, and shut, bolt, and chain it again. This was what Hester had intended; but her mood was changed. She bade the servants all step out of sight, and then threw the door wide open, going forth herself upon the steps. The people had closed round Hope's horse; but Philip was pushing his in between the mob and their object, and riding round and round him with a sort of ludicrous gravity, which lowered the tone of the whole affair to Margaret's mind, and gave her great relief. Mr. Rowland was shaking hands with Hope with one hand, and holding the bridle of the uneasy horse with the other. Hope himself was bespattered with mud from head to foot, and his umbrella was broken to pieces. He nodded cheerfully to Hester when she threw open the door. When she held out her hand to him with a smile as he ascended the steps, the noise of the crowd was suddenly hushed. They understood rather more of what they saw than of anything that could be said to them. They allowed Charles to come out, and lead the horse away round the corner to the stable. They stood stock-still, gaping

and staring, while Hope invited Mr. Rowland in, and Mr. Rowland declined entering; while that gentleman shook hands with the ladies, spoke with Mr. Enderby, mounted Mr. Enderby's horse, and rode off. They saw Philip turn slowly into the house with the family party, and the door closed, before they thought of giving another groan.

"Well, love!" said Hester, looking anxiously at her husband.

"You made good battle," said Philip.

"Yes, I had a pretty hard fight of it, from the toll-bar hither," said Hope, stretching vigorously. "They wrenched my whip out of my hand,—five hands to one; but then I had my umbrella. I broke it to pieces with rapping their knuckles."

"Which are as hard as their pates," observed Philip. "What are we to do next?"

"If they do not disperse presently, I will go and speak to them; but I dare say they have had enough of the show for to-day: Mrs. Plumstead must have satisfied them with oratory. That poor woman's face and voice will haunt me when I have forgotten all the rest. One had almost rather have her against one, than that such screaming should be on one's behalf. Now, my love, how has the morning gone with you?"

"Very pleasantly, I would answer for it from her looks," said Philip. And Hester's face was certainly full of the beauty of happiness.

"Thank God, the morning is over! That is all I have to say about it," replied she.

"Surely those people outside are growing more noisy!" observed Margaret.

"I must change my clothes, in case of its being necessary to speak to them," said Hope. "I look too like a victim at present."

While he and Hester were out of the room, Philip told Margaret how her brother had been treated at the alms-houses. He had narrowly escaped being pulled from his horse, and thrown into the pond. He had been followed half-way to Deerbrook by a crowd, throwing stones and shrieking; and just when he had got beyond their reach, he had met Philip, and learned that he had the same thing to go through at the other extremity of his journey. Finding that both his doors were surrounded, he had judged it best to make for the front, coming home as nearly as possible in his usual manner. He had kept his temper admirably, joking with his detainers, while dealing his blows upon their hands.

"Where will all this end?" cried Margaret.

"With some going to dinner, and others to supper, I imagine," replied Philip, stepping to the window. "From what I see, that seems likely to be the upshot; for here is Sir William Hunter talking to the people. I had rather he should do it than Hope; and, Margaret, I had rather set my

mischievous sister to do it than either. This uproar is all of her making, I am afraid."

"Hester has been telling Mr. Rowland so, this morning."

"I am glad of it. He must help me to work upon her fears, if there is nothing better left to operate upon."

"You will not succeed," said Margaret. "Your sister is as strong a heroine in one direction as mine is in another."

"She shall yield, however. She may be thankful that she is not here to-day. If she was, I would have her out upon the steps, and make her retract everything: and if she should not be able to speak, I would stand by her and say it for her."

"O, Philip! what a horrible idea!"

"Not half so horrible as the mischief she has done. Why, Margaret, if you were one-tenth part as guilty as Priscilla is, I should require you to make reparation."

"Indeed, I hope you would: or rather, that——"

"But do not let us conjure up such dreadful images, my Margaret. You never wronged any one, and you never will."

"Edward never did, I am sure," said Margaret.

"Not even by poisoning children, nor cutting off limbs for sport? Are you quite sure, love?—What is Sir William doing here, with only his groom? He and the people look in high good-

humour with each other, with all this shaking of hands, and nodding and laughing. I cannot conceive what he can be saying to them, for there are not three faces among the whole array that look as if they belonged to rational creatures."

"Never mind," said Margaret. "If what he says sends them away, I care for nothing else about it."

"O, but I do. One would like to be favoured with a specimen of this kind of rural oratory. I ought to benefit by all the oratory that comes in my way, you know: so I shall just open the window an inch or two, now he is drawing hitherward, and take a lesson."

It seemed as if Sir William Hunter desired that his powers of persuasion should be expended on none but the immediate objects of them: for whatever he said was spoken as he bent from his horse, and with the air of a mystery. Many a plump red face was thrust close up to his,—many a pair of round staring eyes was puckered up with mirth as he spoke: the teamster in his olive-coloured smock, the hedger in his shirt-sleeves, and the little bumpkins who had snatched a holiday from scaring the crows, all seemed, by their delight, to be capable of entering into the baronet's method of argumentation. All this stimulated Philip's curiosity to learn what the speechifying tended to. He could catch only a few words, and those were about "a new man,"—"teach him to

take himself off,"—"all bad things come to an end,"—"new state of things, soon." Philip was afraid there was treachery here.—Margaret had no other expectation from the man,—the tyrannical politician, who bore a grudge against a neighbour, for having used his constitutional liberty according to his conscience.

Some spectacle now drew the attention of the crowd another way. It was Lady Hunter, in her chariot and greys, statelily pacing through the village. She had heard that there was some commotion in Deerbrook; and, as sights are rare in the country, she thought she would venture to come to the village to shop, rather than wait for Sir William's account of the affair in the evening, over their wine and oranges, and before he dropped off into his nap. She rightly confided in the people, that they would respect her chariot and greys, and allow her to pass amidst them in safety and honour. She had never seen a person mobbed. Here was a good opportunity. It was even possible that she might catch a glimpse of the ladies in their terrors. At all events, she should be a great person, and see and hear a great deal: so she would go. Orders were given that she should be driven quickly up to the milestone beyond the toll-bar, and then very slowly through Deerbrook to Mrs. Howell's. Her servants were prompt, for they, too, longed to see what was going forward;

and thus they arrived, finding a nice little mob ready-made to their expectations, and no cause of regret but that they arrived too late to see Mr. Hope get home. There were no ladies in terror within sight: but then there was the affecting spectacle of Sir William's popularity. In full view of all the mob, Lady Hunter put a corner of her embroidered handkerchief to each eye, on witnessing the affection of his neighbours to her husband, shown by the final shaking of hands which was now gone through. Sir William then rode slowly up to the carriage-door, followed by his groom, who touched his hat. Orders were given to drive on; and then Lady Hunter's servants touched their hats. The carriage resumed its slow motion, and Sir William rode beside it, his hand on the door, and his countenance solemn as if he was on the bench, instead of on horseback. The great blessing of the arrangement was, that everybody followed. Lady Hunter having come to see the mob, the mob now, in return, went to see Lady Hunter: and while they were cherishing their mutual interest, the family in the corner house were left in peace to prosecute their dinners. Philip threw up the window which looked into the garden, and then ran down to bring Margaret some flowers, to refresh her senses after the hurry of the morning. Margaret let down the chain of the hall-door; and Morris laid the cloth, as she had sent Charles to

sweep down the steps and pavement before the house, that all things might wear as much as possible of their usual appearance. Hester ordered up a bottle of her husband's best ale, and the servants went about with something of the air peculiar to a day of frolic.

"Dear heart! Lady Hunter! Can it be your ladyship?" exclaimed Mrs. Howell, venturing to show her face at the door of her darkened shop, and to make free entrance for her most exalted customer.

"Good heavens! your ladyship! Who would have thought of seeing your ladyship here on such a day!" cried Miss Miskin.

"Where's Bob, Miss Miskin? Do, Miss Miskin, send Bob to take down the shutters:—that is, if your ladyship thinks that Sir William would recommend it. If Sir William thinks it safe,—that is my criterion."

"I hope we are all safe now, Mrs. Howell," replied the lady. "Sir William's popularity is a most fortunate circumstance for us all, and for the place at large."

"O dear, your ladyship! what should we be, not to estimate Sir William? We have our faults, like other people: but really, if we did not know how to value Sir William . . . ."

"Thank Heaven!" said Miss Miskin, "we have not fallen so low as that.—Now your lady-

ship can see a little of our goings on,—now the shutters are down: but, dear heart! your ladyship would not have wondered at our putting them up. I am sure I thought, for my part, that that middle shutter never would have gone up. It stuck, your ladyship . . ."

"O!" cried Mrs. Howell, putting her hands before her face, as if the recollection was even now too much for her, "the middle shutter stuck, —Bob had got it awry, and jammed it between the other two, and there, nothing that Bob could do would move it! And there we heard the noise at a distance,—the cries, your ladyship,— and the shutter would not go up! And Miss Miskin ran out, and so did I . . ."

"Did you really? Well, I must say I admire your courage, Mrs. Howell."

"O, your ladyship, in a moment of desperation, you know . . . If anybody had seen Miss Miskin's face, I'm sure, as she tugged at the shutter,—it was as red . . . really scarlet!"

"And I'm sure so was yours, Mrs. Howell, downright crimson."

"And after all," resumed Mrs. Howell, "we should never have got the shutter up, if Mr. Tucker had not had the politeness to come and help us. But we are talking all this time, and perhaps your ladyship may be almost fainting with the fright. Would not your ladyship step into my

parlour, and have a little drop of something? Let me have the honour,—a glass of mulled port wine, or a drop of cherry-bounce. Miss Miskin,—you will oblige us,—the cherry-bounce, you know."

Miss Miskin received the keys from the girdle with a smile of readiness; but Lady Hunter declined refreshment. She explained that she felt more collected than she might otherwise have done, from her not having been taken by surprise. She had been partly aware, before she left the Hall, of what she should have to encounter.

"Dear heart! what courage!"

"Goodness! how brave!"

"I could not be satisfied to remain safe at the Hall, you know, when I did not know what might be happening to Sir William; so I ordered the carriage, and came. It was a very anxious ride, I assure you, Mrs. Howell. But I found, when I got here, that I need not have been under any alarm for Sir William. He has made himself so beloved, that I believe we have nothing to fear for him under any circumstances. But what can we think, Mrs. Howell, of those who try to create such danger?"

"What, indeed, ma'am! Any one, I'm sure, who would so much as dream of hurting a hair of Sir William's head . . . As I said to Miss Miskin, when Mr. Tucker told us Sir William was come among them,—'that's the criterion,' said I."

"As it happens, Sir William is in no danger, I believe; but no thanks to those who are at the bottom of this disturbance. It is no merit of theirs that Sir William is so popular."

"No, indeed, your ladyship. We may thank Heaven for that, not them. But what *is* to be done, your ladyship? I declare it is not safe to go on in this way. It makes one think of being burnt in one's bed." And all the three shuddered.

"Sir William will take the right measures, you need not doubt, Mrs. Howell. Sir William looks forward, — Sir William is very cautious, though, from his intrepidity, some might doubt it. The safety of Deerbrook may very well be left to Sir William."

"No doubt, your ladyship, no doubt! We should be really afraid to go to our beds, if we had not Sir William to rely on, as Miss Miskin said to me only this morning. But, dear heart! what can Sir William, or an angel from heaven do, in some sorts of dangers? If one might ask, for one's confidential satisfaction, what does Sir William think of this affair of the church-door?"

Amidst shrugs and sighs, Miss Miskin drew quite near, to hear the fate of Deerbrook revealed by Lady Hunter. But Lady Hunter did not know the facts about the church-door, on which the inquiry was based.—This only showed how secret some people could be in their designs. There was no

saying what Lady Hunter might think of it; it really seemed as if Deerbrook, that had had such a good character hitherto, was going to be on a level with popish places,—a place of devastation and conflagration. Lady Hunter looked excessively grave when she heard this; and, if possible, graver than ever, when she was told that not only had a lantern been found in the church-yard with a bit of candle left in the socket, but that a piece of charred stick, full three inches long, had been picked up close by the church-door. After hearing this, Lady Hunter would not commit herself any further. She asked for some hair-pins, with a dignified and melancholy air. While she was selecting the article, she let Mrs. Howell talk on about the lantern and the stick,—that no one wondered about the lantern, knowing what practices went on in the church-yard when quiet people were asleep; but that the charred stick was too alarming: only that, to be sure, anybody might be aware that those who would go into church-yards for one bad purpose would be ready enough for another; and that Heaven only knew how long the churches of the land would be safe while Lowrys were sent to Parliament, and those that sent them there were all abroad.—Lady Hunter sighed emphatically, whispered her desire that the hair-pins should be set down in her account, and went away, amidst deep and mournful curtseys from those whom she left behind.

Under certain circumstances, the mind becomes so rapidly possessed of an idea, is enabled to assimilate it so completely and speedily, that the possessor becomes unaware how very recently the notion was received, and deals with it as an old-established thought. This must be Lady Hunter's excuse (for no other can be found) for speaking of the plot for burning Deerbrook church, as one of the signs of the times which had alarmed Sir William and herself of late. She had so digested Mrs. Howell's fact by the time she had reached Mr. Tucker's shop, that she thus represented the case of the charred stick to Mr. Tucker, without any immediate sting of conscience for telling a lie. She felt rather uncomfortable when Mr. Jones, the butcher, who had stepped in at Tucker's to discuss the event of the morning, observed, with deference, but with much decision, that he was sorry to hear Sir William was made uneasy by the circumstance of the charred stick having been found, as it seemed to him a very simple matter to account for. Several of the boys of the village,—his own son John for one,—had lately taken to the old sport of whirling round a lighted stick at the end of a string, to make a circle of fire in the dark. Sometimes it happened that a spark caught the string; and then the stick was apt to fly off, nobody knew where. It was an unsafe sport, certainly; and as such he had forbidden it to his son John:

but there was no doubt in his mind, (without defending the sport,) that the stick in question had jerked itself over the church-yard wall, and had not been put there by anybody;—to say nothing of its having lain so far from the door, (and in the grass too,) that it was difficult to see what could be expected to catch fire from it. Jones took up his hat from the counter, saying, that as Sir William was close at hand, he would step and tell him what he thought would ease his mind about this affair. This movement laid open to Lady Hunter's mind the enormity of her fib: and remembering that, as far as she knew, her husband had never heard of the charred stick, she vigorously interfered to keep Mr. Jones where he was, averring that Sir William had rather hear the explanation from her than from any person actually resident in Deerbrook. He had his reasons, and she must insist. Mr. Jones bowed; her alarm ceased, and her compunction gradually died away.

When Mr. Tucker had received his orders about the fire-guard, (which occasioned his whispering that there had never been so much need in Deerbrook of guards against fire as now,) Lady Hunter's footman came into the shop to say that his master was in the carriage. Sir William had sent his horse home, and would return in the chariot with his lady. She hastened away, to prevent any chat between Sir William and Mr. Jones. But,

once in the carriage, in all the glory of being surrounded and watched by a number of gaping clowns and shouting boys, she could not resolve to bury herself in the seclusion of the Hall without enjoying the bustle a little longer. She therefore suddenly discovered that she wanted to order a morning cap at Miss Nares's; and the carriage drew up in state before the milliner's door. Miss Flint, whose hair had come out of curl, from her having leaned out of an upper window to watch the commotion, now flew to the glass to pull off her curl-papers; Miss Nares herself hastily drew out of drawers and cupboards the smart things which had been huddled away under the alarm about the sacking of Deerbrook; and then threw a silk handkerchief over the tray, on which stood the elder wine and toast, with which she and her assistant had been comforting themselves after the panic of the morning. All the caps were tried on with mysterious melancholy, but with some haste. Sir William must not be kept long waiting: in times like these, a magistrate's moments were valuable. Sir William was reading the newspaper, in order to convey the impression that he considered the affair of this morning a trifling one; but———

"These are strange times, Miss Nares."

"Very alarming, my lady. I am sure I don't know when we shall recover from the fright. And

no further back than six weeks, I had that person in, my lady, to attend Miss Flint in a sore throat. So little were we aware!"

"I am thankful enough it was not for a broken arm," observed Miss Flint, in accents of devout gratitude.

"Yes, indeed, my dear," observed Miss Nares; "it would have ruined all your prospects in life if he had done by you as he did by the Russell Taylors' nursemaid. Have you never heard that, my lady? Well, I am astonished! I find the story is in everybody's mouth. Mrs. Russell Taylor's nursemaid was crossing the court, with the baby in her arms, when she tripped over the string of Master Hampden Taylor's kite. Well, my lady, she fell; and her first thought, you know, was to save the baby; so she let all her weight go on the other arm—the right—and, as you may suppose, broke it. It snapped below the elbow. The gentleman in the corner-house was sent for immediately, to set it. Now they say (you, my lady, know all about it, of course,) that there are two bones in that part of one's arm, below the elbow."

"There are so. Quite correct. There are two bones."

"Well, my lady, all the story depends upon that. The gentleman in question did set the bones; but he set them across, you see,—as it might be so." And Miss Nares arranged four pieces of

whalebone on the table in the shape of a long, narrow letter X; there could not have been a better exemplification. "The consequence was, my lady, that the poor girl's hand was found, when she had got well, to be turned completely round; and, in fact, it is all but useless."

"When her hands are in her lap," observed Miss Flint, "the palm of the right lies uppermost. Ugh!"

"When she beckons the children with that hand," observed Miss Nares, "they think she means them to go further off. A girl who has to earn her bread, my lady! It is in everybody's mouth, I assure you."

"What has become of the girl?" asked Lady Hunter.

"O, she was got rid of,—sent away,—to save the credit of the gentleman in the corner-house. But these things *will* come out, my lady. You are aware that the Russell Taylors have for some time been employing Mr. Foster, from Blickley?"

"Ah, true! I had heard of that."

With unrelaxed gravity, Lady Hunter returned to her equipage, carrying with her Miss Nares's newest cap and story.

As the carriage drew near the corner-house, the driver, as if sympathizing with his lady's thoughts, made his horses go their very slowest. Lady Hunter raised herself, and leaned forward, that she

might see what she could see in this dangerous abode. The spring evening sunshine was streaming in at the garden window at the back of the house; so that the party in the room was perfectly visible in the thorough light, to any one who could surmount the obstacle of the blind. Lady Hunter saw four people sitting at dinner, and somebody was waiting on them. She could scarcely have told what it was that surprised her; but she exclaimed to Sir William—

"Good heavens! they are at dinner!"

Sir William called out angrily to the coachman to drive faster, and asked whether he meant to keep everybody out till midnight.

The Hopes were far less moved by seeing the baronet and his lady driving by, than the baronet and his lady were by seeing the Hopes dining. They had not the slightest objection to the great folks from the Hall deriving all the excitement and amusement they could from an airing through the village; and they were happily ignorant of the most atrocious stories about Hope which were now circulating from mouth to mouth, all round Deerbrook.

It was not long, however, before they found that they had been indebted to the great folks from the Hall for a certain degree of protection, partly from the equipage having drawn off the attention of some of the idlers, and partly from the people

having been unwilling to indulge all their anger and impertinence in the presence of a magistrate. Scarcely half an hour had elapsed after the sound of the carriage wheels had died away, before a face was seen surmounting the blind of the windows towards the street. Presently another appeared, and another. Men below were hoisting up boys, to make grimaces at the family, and see what was going on. The shutters were closed rather earlier than usual. Philip went out to make a survey. He and Mr. Grey soon returned, to advise that the ladies should quit the house, and that a guard should enter it. The first proposition was refused; the second accepted. Mr. Grey carried off all the money and small valuables. Hester and Margaret bestirred themselves to provide refreshments for Messrs. Grey's and Rowland's men, who were to be ready to act in their defence. They scarcely knew what to expect; but they resolved to remain where Edward was, and to fear nothing from which he did not shrink.

There was much noise round the house—a multitude of feet and of voices. Messengers were sent off to the Hall and to Dr. Levitt, who must now be disturbed, whatever might become of his sermon. Philip brought in Mr. Rowland's men, and declared he should not leave the premises again if the ladies would not be persuaded to go. He took up his station in the hall, whence he thought he

could learn most of what it was that the people intended to do, and be most ready to act as occasion might require. No one could imagine what was designed, or whether there was any design at all on foot. The only fact at present apparent was, that the crowd was every moment increasing.

Hester was stooping over the cellaret in the room where they had dined, when a tremendous crash startled her, and a stone struck down the light which stood beside her, leaving her in total darkness. Philip came to her in a moment. No one had thought of closing the shutters of the back windows; and now the garden was full of people. The house was besieged back and front; and, in ten minutes from the entrance of this first stone, not a pane of glass was left unbroken in any of the lower windows. Hope ran out, his spirit thoroughly roused by these insults; and he was the first to seize and detain one of the offenders; but the feat was rather too dangerous to bear repetition. He was recognised, surrounded, and had some heavy blows inflicted upon him. He succeeded in bringing off his man; but it was by the help of a sally of his friends from the house; and, having locked up his prisoner in his dressing-room, he found it best to await the arrival of a magistrate before he went forth again.

The surgery was the most open to attack; and this being the place where the people expected to

find the greatest number of dead bodies, their energies were directed towards the professional part of the premises. The pupil took flight, and left the intruders to work their pleasure. They found no bodies, and were angry accordingly. When the crashing of all the glass was over, the shelves and cases were torn down, and, with the table and chairs, carried out into the street, and cast into a heap. Other wood was brought; and it was owing to the pertinacity of the mob in front of the house, in attacking the shutters, that the rioters met with no opposition in the surgery. Hope, Enderby, and their assistants, had more on their hands than they could well manage, in beating off the assailants in front. If the shutters were destroyed, the whole furniture of the house would go, and no protection would remain to anybody in it. The surgery must be left to take its chance, rather than this barrier between the women and the mob be thrown down. Whatever offensive warfare was offered from the house was from the servants, from the upper window. The women poured down a quick succession of pails of water; and Charles returned, with good aim, such stones as had found their way in. The gentlemen were little aware, for some time, that the cries of vexation or ridicule, which were uttered now and then, were caused by the feats of their own coadjutors overhead: and it was in consequence of seeing

Hester and Margaret laughing in the midst of their panic that the fact became known to them.

Soon after, a bright light was visible between the crevices of the shutters, and a prodigious shout arose outside. The bonfire was kindled. Hester and Margaret went to the upper windows to see it; and when the attacks upon the shutters seemed to have ceased, Enderby joined them. There were very few faces among the crowd that were known even to Charles, whose business it was, in his own opinion, to know everybody. Mr. Tucker was evidently only looking on from a distance. Mrs. Plumstead had been on the spot, but was gone—terrified into quietness by the fire, into which the rioters had threatened to throw her, if she disturbed their proceedings. She had professed to despise the idea of a ducking in the brook; but a scorching in the fire was not to be braved: so no more was heard of her this night. Three or four of the frequenters of the public-house were on the spot; but, though they lent a hand to throw fresh loads of fuel on the fire, they did not take their pipes from their mouths, nor seem to be prime movers in the riot. The yellow blaze lighted up a hundred faces, scowling with anger or grinning with mirth, but they were all strange—strange as the incidents of the day. A little retired from the glare of the fire, was a figure, revealed only when the flame shot up from being freshly fed—Sir

William Hunter on horseback, with his immoveable groom behind him. How long he had been there, nobody in the house could tell; nor whether he had attempted to do anything in behalf of peace and quiet. There he sat, as if looking on for his amusement, and forgetting that he had any business with the scene.

It was no wonder that Dr. Levitt was not yet visible. If he should arrive by dawn, that was all that could be expected. But where were Mr. Grey and Sydney? Where was Mr. Rowland? Like some of Mr. Hope's other neighbours, who ought to have come to his aid on such an occasion, these gentlemen were detained at home by the emotions of their families. Sydney Grey was locked up by his tender mother as securely as Mr. Hope's prisoner; and all the boy's efforts to break the door availed only to bruise him full as seriously as the mob would have done. His father was detained by the tremors of his wife, the palpitations of Sophia, and the tears and sobs of the twins, all of which began with the certainty of the first stone having been thrown, and were by no means abated by the sight of the reflection of the flames on the sky. Mr. Grey found it really impossible to leave his family, as he afterwards said. He consoled himself with the thought that he had done the best he could, by sending his men.—These things were exactly what his partner said. He, too,

had done the best he could, in sending his men. He, too, found it impossible to leave his family. In the dusk of the evening, when the first stones had begun to fly, the carriage which was heard, in the intervals of the crashes, to roll by, contained Mrs. Rowland and her children, and some one else. It may easily be imagined that it was made impossible to Mr. Rowland to leave his family, to go to the assistance of the people in the corner-house.

A fresh shout soon announced some new device. A kind of procession appeared to be advancing up the street, and some notes of rude music were heard. A party was bringing an effigy of Mr. Hope to burn on the pile. There was the odious thing,—plain enough in the light of the fire,—with the halter round its neck, a knife in the right hand, and a phial,—a real phial out of Hope's own surgery, in the left!

"This is too bad to be borne," cried Enderby; while Hope, who had come up to see what others were seeing, laughed heartily at the representative of himself. "This is not to be endured. Morris, quick! Fetch me half a dozen candles."

"Candles, sir?"

"Yes, candles. I will put this rabble to flight. I wish I had thought of it before."

"O, Philip!" said Margaret, apprehensively.

"Fear nothing, Margaret. I am going to do something most eminently safe, as you will see."

He would not let any one go with him but Charles and Morris. It was some minutes before any effect from his absence was perceived: but, at length, just when the effigy had been sufficiently insulted, and was about to be cast into the flames, and Hester had begged her husband not to laugh at it any more, a roar of anguish and terror was heard from the crowd, which began to disperse in all directions. The ladies ventured to lean out of the window, to see what was the cause of the uproar. They understood in a moment. Mr. Enderby had possessed himself of the skeleton which hung in the mahogany case in the waiting-room, had lighted it up behind the eyes and the ribs, and was carrying it aloft before him, approaching round the corner, and thus confronting the effigy. The spectre moved steadily on, while the people fled. It made straight for Sir William Hunter, who now seemed for the first time disposed to shift his place. He did so with as much slowness and dignity as were compatible with the urgency of the circumstances, edging his horse further and further into the shade. When he found, however, that the spectre continued to light its own path towards him, there was something rather piteous in the tone of his appeal:—"I am Sir William Hunter! I am—. I am Sir William Hunter!" The spectre disregarding even this information, there was nothing for the baronet to do but to gallop

off,—his groom for once in advance of him. When they were out of sight, the spectre turned sharp round, and encountered Dr. Levitt, who was now arriving just when every one else was departing. He started, as might have been expected, spoke angrily to the "idle boy" whom he supposed to be behind the case of bones, and laughed heartily when he learned who was the perpetrator, and what the purpose of the joke. He entered Hope's house, to learn the particulars of the outrage, and order off the prisoner into confinement elsewhere, his ideas being too extensively discomposed to admit of any more sermon-writing this night. Charles had already captured the effigy, and set it up in the hall: a few more pailsful of water extinguished the fire in the street; and in a quarter of an hour the neighbourhood seemed to be as quiet as usual.

"Where are you to sleep after all this fatigue?" said Hope to his wife and sister, when Dr. Levitt and Philip were gone, and the men were at their supper below. "I do not believe they have left you a room which is not open to the night-air. What a strange home to have put you in! Who would have thought it a year ago?"

Hester smiled, and said she never was less sleepy. Morris believed that not a pane of glass was broken in the attics, and her ladies could sleep there, if they preferred remaining at home, to stepping to

Mr. Grey's. They much preferred remaining where they were: and, on examination, it was found that Margaret's room was also entire. Hope proposed to take possession of Charles's attic, for once; and Charles enjoyed the novelty of having a mattress laid down for him in a corner of the upper landing. Morris tempted the ladies and her master to refresh themselves with tea. She piled up the fire to a Christmas height, to compensate for the draughts which blew in from the broken windows. Hope soon grew discontented with her plan.

"This will never do," said he, shivering. "You will all be ill: and nobody must be ill now, for I have no medicines left."

Morris murmured a wish that the physic had been forced down the people's throats.

"It is better where it is, Morris," said her master; "and we will forgive these poor people; shall we not? They are lamentably ignorant, you see."

Morris thought forgiveness was always pretty sure to come in time; but it was not very easy at the moment. She thought she could get over their robbing her master of any amount of property; but she could not excuse their making him ridiculous before his lady's own eyes.

"They cannot make him ridiculous, Morris," said Hester, cheerfully.

"People who are persecuted are considered great, you know, Morris," said Margaret.

"Bravo, ladies!" cried Hope. "You keep up your own spirits, and my complacency, bravely. But seriously, Morris," he continued, perceiving that the vulgarity of the present affliction weighed down the good woman's heart; "is it not true that few of our trials,—none of those which are most truly trials,—seem dignified at the time? If they did, patience would be easier than it is. The death of martyrs to their faith, is grand to look back upon; but it did not appear so to the best of the martyrs at the time. This little trial of ours looks provoking, and foolish, and mean, to us to-night; but whether it really is so, will depend on how we bear it, and whatever it may bring after it. Grand or mean, all we have to do is to be good-humoured with it, Morris."

Morris curtsied low.

"And now, to your rooms," resumed Hope: "this place is growing too chilly for you, notwithstanding Morris's capital fire."

"One thing more," said Margaret. "I am a little uneasy about Maria. Has any one thought of her? She must be anxious about us."

"I will go this moment," said Hope. "Nay, my love, it is early yet; no one in Deerbrook is gone to rest yet, but the children. I can be back in ten minutes, and the street is empty."

"Let him go," said Margaret. "It will be a great kindness; and surely there is no danger now."

Hope was gone. He did not come back in ten minutes, nor in half-an-hour. Even Margaret heartily repented having urged him to leave home. During his absence she thus repented, but no longer when he returned. He brought news which made her hasten to dress herself for the open air, when she was quite ready to retire to rest. It was well that her brother had gone. Maria had been thrown down by the crowd, which had overtaken her as she was walking homewards, and she had broken her leg. The limb was set, the case was a simple and promising one; but she was in pain, and Margaret must go and pass the night with her. How thankful were they all now, that some one had thought of Maria! She had been in extreme anxiety for them; and she would not certainly have sent for aid before the morning. It was indeed a blessing that some one had thought of Maria.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMING TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

Mr. Enderby was too angry with his sister to see her that night. He went straight to his room, at his mother's old house, and did not breakfast with the Rowlands. He knocked at their door when breakfast was finished, and sent to request Mrs. Rowland's presence in the drawing-room. All this had given the lady time to prepare her mood, and some very clever and bold sayings; but when the interview was over, she was surprised to find how some of these sayings had gone out of her mind, and how others had remained there, for want of opportunity to speak them; so that she had not made nearly so good a figure as she had intended.

There was all due politeness in Enderby's way of inducing his sister to sit down, and of asking after the health of herself and her children.

"We are all wonderfully improved, thank you, brother. Indeed I have hopes that we shall all enjoy better health henceforward than we have

ever known. Mr. Walcot's care will be new life to us."

"Whose care?"

"Mr. Walcot's. We brought him with us last night; and he is to go at once into my mother's house. He is a surgeon of the first degree of eminence. I think myself extremely fortunate in having secured him. The chief reason, however, of my inviting him here was, that my poor mother might be properly taken care of. Now I shall be at peace on her account, which I really never was before. Now that she will be in good hands, I shall feel that I have done my duty."

"And, pray, does Rowland know of your having brought this stranger here?"

"Of course. Mr. Walcot is our guest till his own house can be prepared for him. As I tell you, he arrived with me last night."

"And now let me tell you, sister, that either Mr. Walcot is not a man of honour, or you have misinformed him of the true state of affairs here. I suspect the latter to be the case. It is of a piece with the whole of your conduct towards Mr. Hope, —conduct unpardonable for its untruthfulness, and hateful for its malice."

Not one of Mrs. Rowland's prepared answers would suit in this place. Before she could think of anything to say, Enderby proceeded:

"It is a dreadful thing for a brother to have to

speak to a sister as I now speak to you; but it is your own doing. Mr. Hope must have justice; and you have no one to blame but yourself that justice must be done at your expense. I give you fair notice that I shall discharge my duty fully, in the painful circumstances in which you have contrived to place all your family."

"Do what you will, Philip. My first duty is to take care of the health of my parent and my children; and if, by the same means, Deerbrook is provided with a medical man worthy of its confidence, all Deerbrook will thank me."

"Ignorant and stupid as Deerbrook is about many things, Priscilla, it is not so wicked as to thank any one for waging a cowardly war against the good, for disparaging the able and accomplished, and fabricating and circulating injurious stories against people too magnanimous for the slanderer to understand."

"I do not know what you mean, Philip."

"I mean that you have done all this towards the Hopes. You do not know that he and his wife are not happy. You know that Hope is an able and most humane man in his profession, and that he does not steal dead bodies. You know the falsehood of the whole set of vulgar stories that you have put into circulation against him. You know, also, that my mother has entire confidence in him, and that it will go near to break

her heart to have him dismissed for any one else. This is the meaning of what I say. As for what I mean to do,—it is this. I shall speak to Mr. Walcot at once, before his intention to settle here is known . . . ."

"You are too late, my dear sir. Every one in Deerbrook knows it as well as if Dr. Levitt was to give notice of it from the pulpit to-day."

"So much the worse for you, Priscilla. I shall explain the whole of Hope's case to Mr. Walcot, avoiding, if possible, all exposure of you . . . ."

"O, pray do not disturb yourself about that. Mr. Walcot knows me very well. I am not afraid."

"Avoiding, if possible, all exposure of you," resumed Enderby, "but not shrinking from the full statement of the facts, if that should prove necessary to Hope's justification. If this gentleman be honourable, he will decline attending my mother, and go away more willingly than he came. I shall bear testimony to my friend with equal freedom everywhere else; and I will never rest till the wrongs you have done him are repaired,—as far as reparation is possible."

"You take the tone of defiance, I see, Philip. I have not the slightest objection. We defy each other, then."

"I cannot but take that tone for a purpose which, I conceive, is the kindest which, under the

circumstances, can be entertained towards you, sister. I do it in the hope that, before it is too late, you will yourself do the justice which I vow shall be done. I give you peremptory warning, leaving you opportunity to retrieve yourself, to repair the mischief you have done, and to alleviate the misery which I see is coming upon you."

"You are very good: but I know what I am about, and I shall proceed in my own way. I mean to get rid of these Hopes; and, perhaps, you may be surprised to see how soon I succeed."

"The Hopes shall remain as long as they wish to stay, if truth can prevail against falsehood. I am sorry for you, if you cannot endure the presence of neighbours whose whole minds and conduct are noble and humane, and known by you to be so. This desire to get rid of them is a bad symptom, Priscilla,—a symptom of a malady which neither Hope nor Mr. Walcot, nor any one but yourself, can cure. I would have you look to it."

"Is your sermon ended? It is time I was getting ready to hear Dr. Levitt's."

"What I have to say is not finished. I desire to know what you mean by telling everybody that I am engaged to Miss Mary Bruce."

"I said so, because it is true."

The cool assurance with which she said this was too much for Enderby's gravity. He burst out a laughing.

"If not precisely true when I said it, it was sure to be so soon; which is just the same thing. I mean that it shall be true. I have set my heart upon your marrying, and upon your marrying Mary Bruce. I know she would like it, and . . ."

"Stop there! Not another word about Miss Bruce! I will not have you take liberties with her name to me; and this is not the first time I have told you so. It is not true that she would like it,—no more true than many other things that you have said: and if you were to repeat it till night, it would make no sort of impression upon me. Miss Bruce knows little, and cares less, about me; and beware how you say to the contrary!—And now for the plain fact. I am engaged elsewhere."

"No, you are not."

"Yes, I am."

"You will marry no one but Mary Bruce at last, you will see, whatever you may think now."

"For Heaven's sake, Priscilla, if you have any of the regard you profess to have for Miss Bruce, treat her name with some respect!—I am accepted by Margaret Ibbotson."

"I dare say you are! Margaret Ibbotson! So this is at the bottom of all your energy about the Hopes!"

"I admired Hope before I ever saw Margaret,

with sufficient energy to prompt me to anything I mean to do in his support. But Margaret has certainly exalted my feelings towards him, as she has towards everything morally great and beautiful."

"I hope you will all make yourselves happy with your greatness and your beauty: for these friends of yours seem likely to have little else left to comfort themselves with."

"They will be happy with their greatness and loveliness, sister; for it is Heaven's decree that they should. Why will you not let yourself be happy in witnessing it, Priscilla? Why will you not throw off the restraint of bad feelings, and do magnanimous justice to this family, and, having thus opened and freed your mind, glory in their goodness,—the next best thing to being as good as they? You have power of mind to do this:—the very force with which you persist in persecuting them shows that you have power for better things. Believe me, they are full of the spirit of forgiveness. Do but try—"

"Thank you. I am glad you are aware of my power. If they forgive me for anything, it shall be for my power."

"That is not for you to determine, happily. To what extent they forgive is between God and themselves. You lie under their forgiveness,

whether you will or no. I own, Priscilla, I would fain bestow on Margaret a sister whom she might respect rather than forgive."

"Pray how many persons have you persuaded that Margaret Ibbotson is to be my sister-in-law?"

"Very few; for your sake, scarcely any. We have been willing to allow you your own time and methods for extricating yourself from the difficulties you have made for yourself, by your inconsiderate talk about Miss Bruce. I own I cannot conceive how you could originate and carry on such a device. You must now get out of the scrape in your own way."

"I am glad you have told so few people of your entanglement. It makes it an easier matter to help you. I shall deny the engagement everywhere."

"That will hardly avail against my testimony."

"It will, when you are gone. The Deerbrook people always attend to the last speaker. Indeed, I think I have the majority with me now, as the events of last night pretty plainly show."

"Hope is not the first good man who has been slandered and suffered violence. O, Priscilla, I am unwilling to give you up! Let me hope that the pride, the insane pride of this morning, is but the re-action of your internal suffering from witnessing the results of your influence in the out-

rages of last night. Confide this to me now, and give yourself such ease as you yet can."

"Thank you: but you are quite mistaken. I was extremely glad to arrive when I did. It satisfied me as to the necessity of getting rid of these people; and it proved to Mr. Walcot, as I observed to him at the time, how much he was wanted here. Now, if you have nothing more to say to me, I must go. I shall deny your engagement everywhere."

Philip fixed his eyes upon her with an earnestness from which, for one moment, she shrank; but she instantly rallied, and returned him a stare which lasted till she reached the door.

"There is something almost sublime in audacity like this," thought he. "But it cannot last. It comes from internal torture,—a thing as necessarily temporary as faith (the source of the other kind of strength) is durable. Not the slightest compunction has she for having caused the misery she knows of; and not a whit would she relent if she could become aware (which she never shall) of what she made Margaret suffer. I fear my Margaret has still much to endure from her. I will watch and struggle to ward off from her every evil word and thought. This is the only comfort under the misery of her being exposed to the malice of any one belonging to me. No, not the only comfort.

She does not suffer from these things as she did. She says she has a new strength ; and, thank God ! I believe it. Now for Mr. Walcot ! I must catch him as he comes out of church, and see what I can make of him. If he is an honourable man, all may turn out well. If not—Rowland and I must see what can be done next."

CHAPTER XIV.

CONDOLENCE.

The family in the corner-house thought this the strangest Sunday morning they had ever looked upon. Outside their premises, all was like a May sabbath. The gardens sent up their fragrance into the warm, still air: the cottage windows were open, and early roses and late hyacinths appeared within the casements. The swallows were skimming and dipping about the meadows; and the swans steered their majestic course along the river, rippling its otherwise unbroken surface. The men of the village sat on the thresholds of their doors, smoking an early pipe; and their tidy children, the boys with hair combed straight, and the girls with clean pinafores, came abroad?—some to carry the Sunday dinner to the baker's, and others to nurse the baby in the sunshine, or to snatch a bit of play behind a neighbour's dwelling. The contrast within the corner-house was strange. Morris and the boy had been up early to gather the stones, and sweep up the fragments of glass from the floors, to put the effigy out of sight, and

efface the marks of feet in the hall and parlours. The supper had been cleared away in the kitchen, and the smell of spirits and tobacco got rid of: but this was all that the most zealous servants could do. The front shutters must remain closed, and the garden windows empty of glass. The garden itself was a mournful spectacle,—the pretty garden which had been the pride and pleasure of the family all this spring! Part of the wall was thrown down; the ivy trailed on the earth. Of the shrubs, some were pulled up, and others cut off at the roots. The beds were trodden into clay, and the grass, so green and sunny yesterday, was now trampled black where it was not hidden with fragments of the wood-work of the surgery, and with the refuse of the broken glasses and spilled drugs. Hope had also risen early. He had found his scared pupil returned, and wandering about the ruins of his abode,—the surgery. They set to work together, to put out of sight whatever was least seemly of the scattered contents of the professional apartment; but, with all their pains, the garden looked forlorn and disagreeable enough when Hester came down, shawled, to make breakfast in the open air of the parlour, and her husband thought it time to go and see how Maria had passed the night, and to bring Margaret home.

Hester received from her husband and sister a favourable report of Maria. She had slept, and

Margaret had slept beside her. Maria carried her philosophy into all the circumstances of her lot, and she had been long used to pain and interruption of her plans. These things, and the hurry of an accident in the street, might dismay one inexperienced in suffering, but not her. When not kept awake by actual pain, she slept; and when assured that her case was perfectly simple, and that there was every probability of her being as well as usual in a few weeks, all her anxieties were for the Hopes. No report of them could have satisfied her so well as Mr. Hope's early visit,—as his serene countenance and cheerful voice. She saw that he was not sad at heart; and warmly as she honoured his temper, she could hardly understand this. No wonder; for she did not know what his sufferings had previously been from other causes, nor how vivid was his delight at the spirit in which Hester received their present misfortunes. Margaret saw at once that all was well at home, and made no inquiries about her sister.

"Here is a letter for you, with a magnificent seal," said Hester, as they entered. "And here is tea as hot, I believe, as if we were still blessed with glass windows."

The letter had just been left by Sir William Hunter's groom. It was from the Baronet, and its contents informed Mr. Hope that his attendance

would not be required at the almshouses in future, as their inmates were placed under the medical superintendence of Mr. Walcot.

"I am glad," said Hester. "No more danger and insult from that quarter!"

"Nor funds either, my dear. It is pleasant enough to have no insult and danger to apprehend; but what will you say to having no funds?"

"We shall see when that time comes, love. Meantime, here is breakfast, and the sweet Sunday all before us."

The pressure of her hand by her husband effaced all woes, present and future.

"Who is Mr. Walcot?" asked Margaret.

"Somebody from Blickley, I suppose," said Hester.

"No," replied Hope. "Mr. Walcot is a surgeon, last from Cheltenham, who settled in Deerbrook at seven o'clock yesterday evening, and who has already swept the greater part of the practice of the place, I suspect. He is, no doubt, the 'better doctor,' 'the new man,' of whom we have heard so much of late."

Hester changed colour, and Margaret too, while Hope related the arrival of Mrs. Rowland and her party, as he had heard it from his pupil early this morning.—What sort of man was Mr. Walcot? Time must show. His coming to settle in this manner, at such a conjuncture of circumstances,

did not look very well, Hope said; but it should be remembered that he must necessarily be extremely prejudiced against the family in the corner house, if his information about Deerbrook was derived from Mrs. Rowland. He ought not to be judged till he had had time and opportunity to learn for himself what was the real state of affairs in the place. He must have fair play; and it was very possible that he might turn out a man who would give others fair play.

At the next knock, Hester started, thereby showing that she was moved. Mr. Jones had called to know how the family were; and, after satisfying himself on this point, had left a delicate sweetbread, with his respects, and wishes that Mrs. Hope might relish it after her fright. This incident gave the little family more pleasure than Mr. Walcot had yet caused them pain. Here was sympathy,—the most acceptable offering they could receive.

Next came a message of inquiry from Dr. and Mrs. Levitt, with an intimation that they would call, if not inconvenient to the family, after church. This was pleasant too.

While it was being agreed that a nurse must be found immediately for Maria, and that the glazier at Blickley must have notice to send people to mend the windows as early as possible to-morrow morning, a letter was brought in, which looked

longer, but less grand, than Sir William Hunter's. It was from Mr. Rowland.

(" Private.)

" *Sunday morning*, 7 *o'clock.*

" My dear Sir,—

" During the greater part of an anxious night, my mind was full of the intention of calling on you this morning, for some conversation on a topic which must be discussed between us; but the more I dwell upon what must be said, the more I shrink from an interview which cannot but be extremely painful to each party; and I have at length come to the conclusion that, for both our sakes, it is best to write what I have to say. It is painful enough, God knows, to write it!

" Your position here, my dear sir, must have been anything but pleasant for some time past. I regret that its uneasiness should have been augmented, as I fear it has, by the influence of any one connected with myself. My respect for you has been as undeviating as it is sincere; and I have not to reproach myself with having uttered a word concerning you or your family which I should be unwilling to repeat to yourselves: but I am aware that the same cannot be said with regard to every one for whom I am in a manner answerable. In relation to this unpleasant fact I can only say, that I entreat you to accept the assurance of my deep regret and mortification.

"A new aspect of affairs has presented itself,—to me very suddenly, as I trust you will believe, on my word of honour. A gentleman of your profession, named Walcot, arrived last night, with a view to settling in Deerbrook. The first inducement held out to him was the medical charge of Mrs. Enderby, and of the whole of my family: but, of course, it is not probable that his expectations of practice among your patients stop here; and the present unfortunate state of the public mind of Deerbrook regarding yourself, makes it too probable that his most sanguine expectations will be realized. I write this with extreme pain; but I owe it to you not to disguise the truth, however distasteful may be its nature.

"These being the circumstances of the case, it appears to me hopeless to press the departure of Mr. Walcot. And if he went away today, I should fear that some one would arrive tomorrow to occupy his position, Yet, my dear sir, justice must be done to you. After protracted and anxious consideration, one mode of action has occurred to me, by which atonement may be made to you for what has passed. Let me recommend it to your earnest and favourable consideration.

"Some other place of residence would, I should hope, yield you and your family the consideration and comfort of which you have here been most unjustly deprived. Elsewhere you might ensure the

due reward of that professional ability and humanity which we have shown ourselves unworthy to appreciate. If you could reconcile yourself to removing, with your family, I believe that the peace of our society would be promoted, that unpleasant collisions of opinions and interests would be avoided, and that that reparation would be made to you which I fear would be impracticable here. All difficulty about the process of removal might and should be obviated. To speak frankly, I should, in that case, consider myself your debtor to such an amount as, by a comparison of your losses and my means, should appear to us both to be just. I believe I might venture to make myself answerable for so much as would settle you in some more favourable locality, and enable you to wait a moderate time for that appreciation of your professional merits which would be certain to ensue.

"I need not add that, that in case of your acceding to my proposition, all idea of *obligation* would be misplaced. I offer no more than I consider actually your due. The circumstance of the father of a large and rising family offering to become responsible to such an extent, indicates that my sense of your claim upon me is very strong. I should be glad to be relieved from it: and I therefore, once more, beseech your best attention to my proposal,— *the latter particulars of which have been confided to no person whatever*,— nor

shall they be, under any circumstances, unless you desire it.

"I shall await your reply with anxiety,—yet with patience, as I am aware that such a step as I propose cannot be decided on without some reflection.

"I rejoice to find that your family have not suffered materially from the outrages of last night. It was matter of sincere regret to me that the unexpected arrival of my family at the very time prevented my hastening to offer my best services to you and yours. The magistracy will, of course, repair all damages; and then I trust no evil consequences will survive.

"I beg my best compliments to Mrs. Hope and Miss Ibbotson, and entreat you to believe me, my dear sir,

"With the highest respect,

"Your obedient servant,

"H. Rowland."

For one moment Hester looked up in her husband's face, as he read this letter in a subdued voice,—for one moment she hoped he would make haste to live elsewhere,—in some place where he would again be honoured as he once was here, and where all might be bright and promising as ever: but that moment's gaze at her husband changed her thoughts and wishes. Her colour rose with the

same feelings which drew a deep seriousness over his countenance.

"Mr. Rowland means well," said Margaret; "but surely this will never do."

"I hardly know what you would consider meaning well," replied Hope. "Rowland would buy himself out of an affair which he has not the courage to manage by nobler means. He would give hush-money for the concealment of his wife's offences. He would bribe me from the assertion of my own character, and would, for his private ends, stop the working out of the question between Deerbrook and me. This is, to my mind, the real aspect of his proposal, however persuaded he himself may be that he intends peace to his neighbours, and justice to me.—This letter," he continued, waving it before him, "is worthy only of the fire, where I would put it this moment, but that I suppose prudence requires that we should retain in our own hands all evidence whatever relating to the present state of our affairs."

"I do not exactly see what is to become of us," said Hester, cheerfully.

"Nor do I, love: but is not all the world in the same condition? How much does the millionnaire know of what is to intervene between to-day and his death?"

"And the labouring classes," observed Margaret,—"that prodigious multitude of toiling, think-

ing, loving, trusting, beings! How many of them see further than the week which is coming round? And who spends life to more purpose than some of them? They toil, they think, they love, they obey, they trust; and who will say that the most secure in worldly fortune are making a better start for eternity than they? They see duty around them and God above them; and what more need they see?"

"You are right," said Hester, "What I said was cowardly. I wish I had your faith."

"You have it," said her husband. "There was faith in your voice, and nothing faithless in what you said. It is a simple truth, that we cannot see our way before us. We must be satisfied to discern the duty of the day, and for the future to do what we ought always to be doing,—'to walk by faith and not by sight.' Now, as to this present duty,—it seems to me very clear. It is my duty to offer moral resistance to oppression, and to make a stand for my reputation. When it pleases God that men should be overwhelmed by calumny, it is a dreadful evil which must be borne as well as it may; but not without a struggle. We must not too hastily conclude that this is to be the issue in our case. We must stay and struggle for right and justice,—struggle for it, by living on with firm, patient, and gentle minds. This is surely what we ought to do, rather than go away for the sake of ease,

leaving the prejudices of our neighbours in all their virulence, because we have not strength to combat them, and letting the right succumb to the wrong, for want of faith and constancy to vindicate it."

"O, we will stay!" cried Hester. "I will try to bear everything, and be thankful to have to bear, for such reasons. It is all easy, love, when you lay open your views of our life,—when you give us your insight into the providence of it. I believe I should have looked at it in this way before, if you had been suffering in any great cause,—any cause manifestly great, because the welfare of many others was involved in it. I see now that the principle of endurance and the duty of steadfastness are the same, though——" And yet she paused, and bit her lip.

"Though the occasion looks insignificant enough," said her husband. "True. Some might laugh at our having to appeal to our faith because we have been mobbed on pretences which make us blush to think what nonsense they are, and because a rival has come to supplant me in my profession. But with all this we have nothing to do. The truth to us is, that we are living in the midst of malice and hatred, and that poverty stares us in the face. If these things are quite enough for our strength, (and I imagine we shall find they are so,) we have no business to quarrel with

our trial because it is not of a grander kind.—Well! wife and sister, we stay. Is it not so?—Then I will go and write to Mr. Rowland."

The sisters were silent for some moments after he had left them. Margaret was refreshing her flowers,—the flowers which Philip had brought in from the garden the day before. How precious were they now, even above other flowers brought by the same hand,—for not another blossom was left in the desolate garden! Margaret was resolving silently that she would keep these alive as long as she could, and then dry them in memory of the place they came from, in its wedding trim. Hester presently showed the direction her thoughts had taken, by saying—

"I should think that it must be always possible for able and industrious people, in health, to obtain bread."

"Almost always possible, provided they can cast pride behind them."

"Ah, I suspect that pride is the real evil of poverty,—of gentlefolks' poverty. I could not promise, for my own part, to cast pride behind me: but then, you know, it has pleased God to give me something to be proud of, far different from rank and money. I could go to jail or the workhouse with my husband, without a blush. The agony of it would not be from pride."

"Happily, we are sure of bread, mere bread,"

said Margaret, "for the present, and for what we call certainty. What you and I have is enough for bread."

"What I have can hardly be called sufficient for even that," said Hester: "and you—I must speak my thankfulness for that—you will soon be out of the reach of such considerations."

"Not soon: and I cannot separate my life from yours—I cannot fancy it. Do not let us fancy it just now."

"Well, we will not. I am glad Susan has warning from me to go. It is well that we began retrenching so soon. We must come to some *full* explanation with Morris, that we may see what can best be done for her."

"She will never leave you while you will let her stay."

"It may be necessary to dismiss Charles. But we will wait to talk that over with my husband. He will tell us what we ought to do. Was that a knock at the door?"

"I rather think it was a feeble knock."

It was Mrs. Grey, accompanied by Sydney. Mrs. Grey's countenance wore an expression of solemn misery, with a little of the complacency of excitement under it. The occasion was too great for winks: mute grief was the mood of the hour. Sydney was evidently full of awe. He seemed hardly to like to come into the parlour. Mar-

garet had to go to the door, and laugh at him for his shyness. His mother's ideas were as much deranged as his own by the gaiety with which Hester received them, boasting of the thorough ventilation of the room, and asking whether Sophia did not think their bonfire surpassed the famous one at the last election but one. Sophia had not seen anything of the fire of last night. She had been so much agitated, that the whole family, Mr. Grey and all, had been obliged to exert themselves to compose her spirits. Much as she had wished to come this morning, to make her inquiries in person, she had been unable to summon courage to appear in the streets; and indeed her parents could not press it—she had been so extremely agitated! She was now left in Alice's charge.

Hester and Margaret hoped that when Sophia found there was nothing more to fear, and that her cousins were perfectly well, she would be able to spare Alice for some hours, to wait upon Miss Young. Maria's hostess was with her now, and Margaret would spend the night with her again, if a nurse could not be procured before that time. Mrs. Grey had not neglected Maria in her anxiety for her cousins. She was just going to propose that Alice should be the nurse to-night, and had left word at Miss Young's door that she herself would visit her for the hour and half that people were in church. Her time this morning

was therefore short. She was rejoiced to see her young friends look so much like themselves—so differently from what she had dared to expect. And Mr. Hope—it was not fair perhaps to ask where he was:—he had probably rather not have it known where he might be found: (and here the countenance relaxed into a winking frame.)—Not afraid to show himself abroad! Had been out twice! and without any bad consequences! It would be a cordial to Sophia to hear this, and a great relief to Mr. Grey. But what courage! It was a fine lesson for Sydney. If Mr. Hope was really only writing, and could spare a minute, it would be a comfort to see him. Hester went for him. He had just finished his letter. She read and approved it, and sat down to take a copy of it, while her husband occupied her seat beside Mrs. Grey.

The wife let fall a few tears—tears of gentle sorrow and proud love—not on her husband's letter—(for not for the world would she have had that letter bear a trace of tears)—but on the paper on which she wrote. The letter appeared to her very touching; but others might not think so: there was so much in it which she alone could see! It took her only a few minutes to copy it; but the copying gave her strength for all the day. The letter was as follows:—

"My dear Sir—Your letter expresses, both in its matter and phrase, the personal regard which I have always believed you to entertain towards me and mine. I cannot agree with you, however, in thinking that the proceeding you propose involves real good to any of the parties concerned in it. The peace of society in Deerbrook is not likely to be permanently secured by such deference to ignorant prejudice as would be expressed by the act of my departure; nor would my wrongs be repaired by my merely leaving them behind me. I cannot take money from your hands as the price of your tranquillity, and as a commutation for my good name, and the just rewards of my professional labours. My wife and I will not remove from Deerbrook. We shall stay, and endeavour to discharge our duty, and to bear our wrongs, till our neighbours learn to understand us better than they do.

"You will permit me to say, with the respect which I feel, that we sympathize fully in the distress of mind which you must be experiencing. If you should find comfort in doing us manful justice, we shall congratulate you yet more than ourselves: if not, we shall grieve for you only the more deeply.

"My wife joins me in what I have said, and in kindly regards. "Yours sincerely,

"Edward Hope."

Edward had left his seal with Hester. She sealed the letter, rang for Charles, charged him to deliver it into Mr. Rowland's own hands, placed the copy in her bosom to show to Margaret, and returned to the parlour. Mrs. Grey, who was alone with Hope, stopped short in what she was saying.

"Go on," said Hope. "We have no secrets here, and no fears of being frightened,—for one another any more than for ourselves. Mrs. Grey was saying, my dear, that Mr. Walcot is very popular here already; and that everybody is going to church, to see him."

Mrs. Grey had half a dozen faults or oddities of Mr. Walcot's to tell of already; but she was quietly checked in the middle of her list by Mr. Hope, who observed that he was bound to exercise the same justice towards Mr. Walcot that he hoped to receive from him,—to listen to no evil of him which could not be substantiated: and it was certainly too early yet for anything to be known about him by strangers, beyond what he looked like.

"To go no deeper than his looks, then," continued Mrs. Grey, "nobody can pretend to admire them. He is extremely short. Have you heard how short he is?"

"Yes: that inspired me with some respect for him, to begin with. I have heard so much of my being

too tall, all my life, that I am apt to feel a profound veneration for men who have made the furthest escape from that evil. By the way, my dear, I should not wonder if Enderby is disposed in Walcot's favour by this; for he is even taller than I."

"I am surprised that you can joke on such a subject, Mr. Hope. I assure you, you are not the only sufferers by this extraordinary circumstance,—of Mr. Walcot's arrival. It is very hard upon us, that we are to have him for an opposite neighbour,—in Mrs. Enderby's house, you know. Sophia and I have been in the habit of observing that house, for the old lady's sake, many times in a day. We scarcely ever looked out, but we saw her cap over the blind, or some one or another was at the door, about one little affair or another. It has been a great blank since she was removed,—the shutters shut, and the bills up, and nobody going and coming. But now we can never look that way."

"I am afraid you will have to get Paxton to put up a weathercock for you on his barn, so that you may look in the opposite direction for the wind."

"Nay, Edward, it really is an evil," said Hester, "to have an unwelcome stranger settled in an opposite house, where an old friend has long lived. I can sympathize with Mrs. Grey."

"So can I, my dear. It is an evil: but I should,

under any circumstances, hold myself free to look out of my window in any direction,—that is all. Do, Mrs. Grey, indulge yourself so far."

"We cannot possibly notice him, you know. It must be distinctly understood, that we can have nothing to say to an interloper like Mr. Walcot. Mr. Grey is quite of my opinion. You will have our support in every way, my dear sir; for it is perfectly plain to our minds, that all this would not have happened but for your having married into our connexion so decidedly. But this intruder has been thought, and talked about, by us more than he is worth. I want to hear all you can tell me about the riot, Hester, love. Your husband has been giving me some idea of it, but..... Bless me! there is the first bell for church; and I ought to have been at Miss Young's by this time. We must have the whole story, some day soon; and, indeed, Sophia would quarrel with me for hearing it when she is not by. Where is Sydney?"

Sydney and Margaret were in the garden, consulting about its restoration. Sydney declared he would come and work at it every day, till it was cleared and planted. He would begin to-morrow with the cairn for the rock-plants.

"I am glad the Levitts are to call after church," observed Mrs. Grey. "They always do what is proper, I must say; and not less towards dissen-

ters than their own people. I suppose Dr. Levitt will consult with you about the damages."

"Sooner or later, I have no doubt."

"Come, Sydney, we must be gone. You hear the bell. Sophia will be quite revived by what I shall tell her, my dears. No,—do not come out to the door,—I will not allow it, on my account. There is no knowing what I might have to answer for, if you let yourself be seen at the door on my account. I am sorry you will not come in this evening. Are you quite determined? Well, perhaps Mr. Grey will say you are right not to leave your premises in the evening, at present. No; you must not say anything about *our* coming just now. We have not courage, really, for that. Now hold your tongue, Sydney. It is out of the question,—your being out of our sight after dark. Good morning, my love."

As soon as Charles returned home, after having delivered the letter into Mr. Rowland's own hands, Mr. Hope gathered his family together, for their Sunday worship. The servants entered the room with countenances full of the melancholy which they concluded, notwithstanding all evidence to the contrary, that their master and mistress must be experiencing: but, when service was over, they retired with the feeling that the family-worship had never been more gladsome.

CHAPTER XV.

KEEPING SUNDAY.

Mr. Enderby was in the church-yard when the congregation poured out from the porch. Group after group walked away, and he saw no signs of the party he was waiting for. Mrs. Rowland lingered in the aisle, with the intention of allowing all Deerbrook time to look at Mr. Walcot. When none but the Levitts remained, the lady issued forth from the porch, leaning on Mr. Walcot's arm, and followed by four of her children, who were walking two and two, holding up their heads, and glancing round to see how many people were observing the new gentleman they had brought with them from Cheltenham. Mr. Enderby approached the family party, and said,

"Sister, will you introduce me to Mr. Walcot?"

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear brother. Mr. Walcot, my brother, Mr. Enderby. Brother, my friend, Mr. Walcot."

Mr. Walcot blushed with delight, looked as if he longed to shake hands if he dared, and said

something of his joy at becoming acquainted with the brother of so kind a friend as Mrs. Rowland.

"There is not much to be apprehended here," thought Mr. Enderby. "How perfectly unlike what I had fancied! This dragon, which was to devour the Hopes, seems a pretty harmless creature. Why, he looks a mere boy, and with hair so light, one can't see it without spectacles. What will he do with himself in my mother's good house? Fanny Grey's bird-cage would suit him better;—and then he might hang in Rowland's hall, and be always ready for use when the children are ill. I must have out what I mean to say to him, however; and, from his looks, I should fancy I may do what I please with him. He will go away before dinner, if I ask him, I have little doubt. I wonder that, while she was about it, Priscilla did not find up somebody who had the outside of a professional man, at least. This youth looks as if he would not draw one's tooth for the world, because it would hurt one so! How he admires the rooks and the green grass on the graves, because the children do!—Sister," he continued aloud, "I am sorry to deprive you of your companion; but it is absolutely necessary that Mr. Walcot and I should have some conversation together immediately. The children will go home with you; and we will follow presently."

Mrs. Rowland looked thunder and lightning at her brother; but Mr. Walcot appeared so highly pleased, that she considered it safest to acquiesce in the present arrangement, trusting to undo Philip's work in the course of the afternoon. So she sailed away with the children.

"This is no time for ceremony," observed Enderby, as he led the way to the walk under the trees. "I have used none with my sister, as you perceive; and I shall use none with you."

"Thank you, sir. My dear parents have always taught me that there could be no occasion for ceremony where people feel kindly, and mean only what is right. They will be pleased to hear that you do not think ceremony necessary between us."

"The circumstances are too urgent for it in the present case;—that is what I mean," said Philip. "I am confident, Mr. Walcot, from what you say about feeling kindly and meaning rightly, that you cannot be aware what is the real state of affairs in Deerbrook, or you could not have been induced to think of settling here."

"O, I assure you, sir, you are mistaken. Mrs. Rowland herself was the person who told me all about it: and I repeated all she said to my parents. They strongly advised my coming; and I am sure they would never recommend me to do anything that was not right."

"Then, if I tell you what I know to be the true state of the case here, will you represent it fully to your parents, and see what they will say then?"

"Certainly. I can have no objection to that. They will be very sorry, however, if any difficulty should arise. I had a letter from them this very morning, in which they say that they consider me a fortunate youth to have fallen in with such a friend as Mrs. Rowland, who promises she will be a mother, or rather, I should say, a sister to me, and to have stepped at once into such practice as Mrs. Rowland says I shall certainly have here. They say what is very true, that it is a singular and happy chance to befall a youth who has only just finished his education."

"That is so true, that you ought not to be surprised if it should turn out that there is something wrong at the bottom of the affair. I am going to show you what this wrong is, that you may take warning in time, and not discover, when it is too late, that you have been injuring an honourable man who has been too hardly treated already."

"I should be sorry to do that: but I cannot think what you can mean."

"I dare say not. Pray have you been told of a Mr. Hope who lives here?"

"O, yes; we saw the people breaking his windows as we drove past, yesterday evening. He must be a very improper, disagreeable man. And it is

very hard upon the ladies and gentlemen here to have no one to attend them but that sort of person."

"That is one account of Mr. Hope: now you must hear the other." And Mr. Enderby gave a full statement of Hope's character, past services, and present position, in terms which he conceived to be level with the capacity of the young man. He kept his sister out of the story, as far as it was possible, but did not soften the statement of her calumnies, though refraining from exhibiting their origin. "Now," said he, at the end of his story, "have I not shown cause for consideration, as to whether you should settle here or not?"

"For consideration, certainly. But, you see, it is so difficult to know what to think. Here is Mrs. Rowland telling me one set of things about Mr. Hope, and you tell me something quite different."

"Well; what do you propose to do?"

"I shall consult my parents, of course."

"Had not you better set off by the coach to-morrow morning, and tell your parents all about it before you commit yourself?"

"I do not see how I could do that very well, as I have engaged to go over and see these people in Sir William Hunter's almshouses, that I am to have the charge of. No. I think my best way will be this. I will write fully to my parents first. I will do that this afternoon. Then, considering

that I have said I shall stay here, and that the house is going to be got ready for me,—and considering how hard it is upon the ladies and gentlemen here to have nobody to attend them but a person they do not like,—and considering, too, that I cannot tell for myself what Mr. Hope really is, while people differ so about him, I think I had better wait here, (just as I should have done if you had not told me all this,) till Mrs. Rowland and you, and Sir William Hunter, and everybody, have settled whether Mr. Hope is really a good man or not: and then, you know, I can go away, after all, if I please."

Philip thought that Dr. Levitt must have been preaching to his new parishioner to join the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. Mr. Walcot himself seemed quietly satisfied with his own decision, for he adhered to it, repeating it in answer to every appeal that Philip could devise.

"I think it right to warn you," said Philip, "that if the prospect of being my mother's medical attendant has been part of your inducement to settle here, you have been misled in relying on it. My mother is much attached to Mr. Hope and his family; she prefers him to every other medical attendant; and I shall take care that she has her own way in this particular."

"While I am in Mrs. Rowland's house, I shall, of course, attend Mrs. Rowland's family," replied Mr. Walcot.

"Her children, if she pleases; but not necessarily her mother."

"Yes; her mother too, as I dare say you will see."

"You will allow Mrs. Enderby to choose her own medical attendant, I presume?"

"O yes; and I have no doubt she will choose me. Mrs. Rowland says so."

"Here comes a gentleman with whom I want to speak," said Philip, seeing Mr. Grey approaching from a distance. "He is as warm a friend and admirer of Mr. Hope as I am; and——"

"Mr. Hope married into his family,—did not he?"

"Yes; but Mr. Grey and Mr. Hope were friends long before either of them were acquainted with Mrs. Hope. The friendship between the gentlemen was more likely to have caused the marriage than the marriage the friendship."

"Ah! that does happen sometimes, I know."

"What I was going to say is this, Mr. Walcot, that Mr. Hope's friends have determined to see justice done him; and that if, in the prosecution of this design, you should imagine that you are remarkably coolly treated,—by myself, for instance,—you must remember that I fairly warned you from the beginning that I shall give no countenance to any man who comes knowingly to establish himself on the ruins of a traduced man's reputation. You will remember this, Mr. Walcot."

"O, certainly. I am sure I shall expect nothing from anybody; for nobody here knows me. It is only through Mrs. Rowland's kindness that I have any prospect here at all."

"I will just give you one more warning, as you seem a very young man. The Deerbrook people are apt to be extremely angry when they are angry at all. What would you think of it, if they should break your windows, as they broke Mr. Hope's last night, when they find that you have been thriving upon his practice, while they were under a mistake concerning him which you were fully informed of?"

"I do not think I should mind it. I might get over it, you know, as Mr. Hope would then have done. Or I might go away, after all, if I pleased. But you want to speak to that gentleman; so I will wish you good morning."

"You will represent to your parents all I have said? Then pray do not omit the last,—about what dreadful people the Deerbrook people are, when they are angry; and how likely it is that they may be very angry with you some day. I advise you by all means to mention this."

"Yes, certainly; thank you. I shall write this afternoon."

"I wish Mrs. Rowland joy of her fledgeling," said Enderby, as he joined Mr. Grey.

"I was just thinking, as you and he came up, that a few lessons from the drill-serjeant at

Blickley would do him no harm. Perhaps, however, your sister will teach him to hold up his head better. I rather think he is a little scared with the rooks, is not he? What in the world is your sister to do with him, now she has got him here?"

"I hope little Anna will lend him her cup and ball on rainy days."

"Do you find him a simpleton?"

"I hardly know. One must see him more than once to be quite sure. But enough of him for the present. I have just come from the corner-house; but I am not going to talk about the Hopes either: and yet I have something out of the common way to say to you, my good friend."

"I am glad you call me by that name," observed Mr. Grey, kindly. "I never could see, for the life of me, why men should look askance upon one another, because their relations (no matter on which side, or perhaps on both) happen to be more or less in the wrong."

"And there are other reasons why you and I should beware of being affected by the faults and weaknesses of our connexions, Mr. Grey,—and that is what I have now to say. I mean, because we may become connected ourselves. How will you like me for a relation, I wonder."

"It is so, then."

"It is so: and it is by Margaret's desire that I

inform you of it now, before the circumstance becomes generally known. If you think Mrs. Grey will be gratified by early information, I believe I must beg that you will go home, and tell her directly. We are as fully aware as you can be, of the absurdity of this way of talking: but circumstances compel us to . . . . . ."

"I know, I understand. People here have been persuaded that you were engaged to some other lady; and you will have no help, in contradicting this, from your own family, who may not like your marrying into our connexion so decidedly, —as I have heard the ladies say about our friend Hope."

"Just so."

"Well, my opinion is, that it is of little consequence what your friends may say now, when time is so sure to justify your choice. There is no need for me to tell you that you are a happy man, Mr. Enderby. There is not a more amiable girl living than that cousin Margaret of mine. I charge you to make her happy, Enderby. I do not mean that I have any doubt of it; but I charge you to make her happy."

Philip did not like to speak (any more than to do other things) without being pretty sure of doing it well. He was silent now, because he could not well speak. He was anything but ashamed of his attachment to Margaret; but he could not open his lips upon it.

"I trust there is the better chance of her being happy," continued Mr. Grey, "that she is going to marry a man of somewhat less enthusiasm than her sister has chosen, Mr. Enderby."

"Do not speak of that, Mr. Grey. We might not agree. I can only say that I am so fully sensible of my immeasurable inferiority to Hope . . . I know I am hardly worthy to appreciate him . . . I cannot give you an idea of my sense of his superiority . . . . And to hear him set below me . . ."

"Do not mistake me, my dear friend. No one can value Mr. Hope more than I do, as indeed I have every reason to do. Only you see the effects of that unfortunate vote of his. That is just what I mean, now. If you had been in his place, I rather think you would have done what was prudent,—you would not have run into anything so useless as giving that vote, when there was not another person in Deerbrook to vote the same way. You would not, Enderby."

"I trust I should, if I had had Margaret to keep me up to my duty."

"Well, well: I may be wrong; but it vexes me to see anxiety and sorrow in my cousin Hester's beautiful face: and that is the truth of it. But indeed, her husband is a fine fellow, and I respect him from the bottom of my soul; and it makes me extremely happy to hear that Margaret has met with one whom I can as cordially approve. You

have my hearty good wishes, I assure you. Now, when may I see my cousin, to wish her joy? I must go home now, and let my family know about it, you say."

"If you please; for I must tell Margaret how kindly you have received what I had to communicate. She will be waiting anxiously."

"Why, she could not doubt my good-will, surely. How should I be otherwise than pleased? Nor have I any doubt of my wife's feeling. You stand very high in her good graces, Enderby, I can assure you. I was not fully aware of this myself, till I saw how vexed she was at hearing that you were engaged to that lady abroad. She never could make out what Margaret was feeling about that: but she used to say to me, when we were by ourselves, that if Margaret was not hurt and angry, she was. But I suppose the little gipsy was laughing at us and all Deerbrook all the time; though she kept her gravity wonderfully."

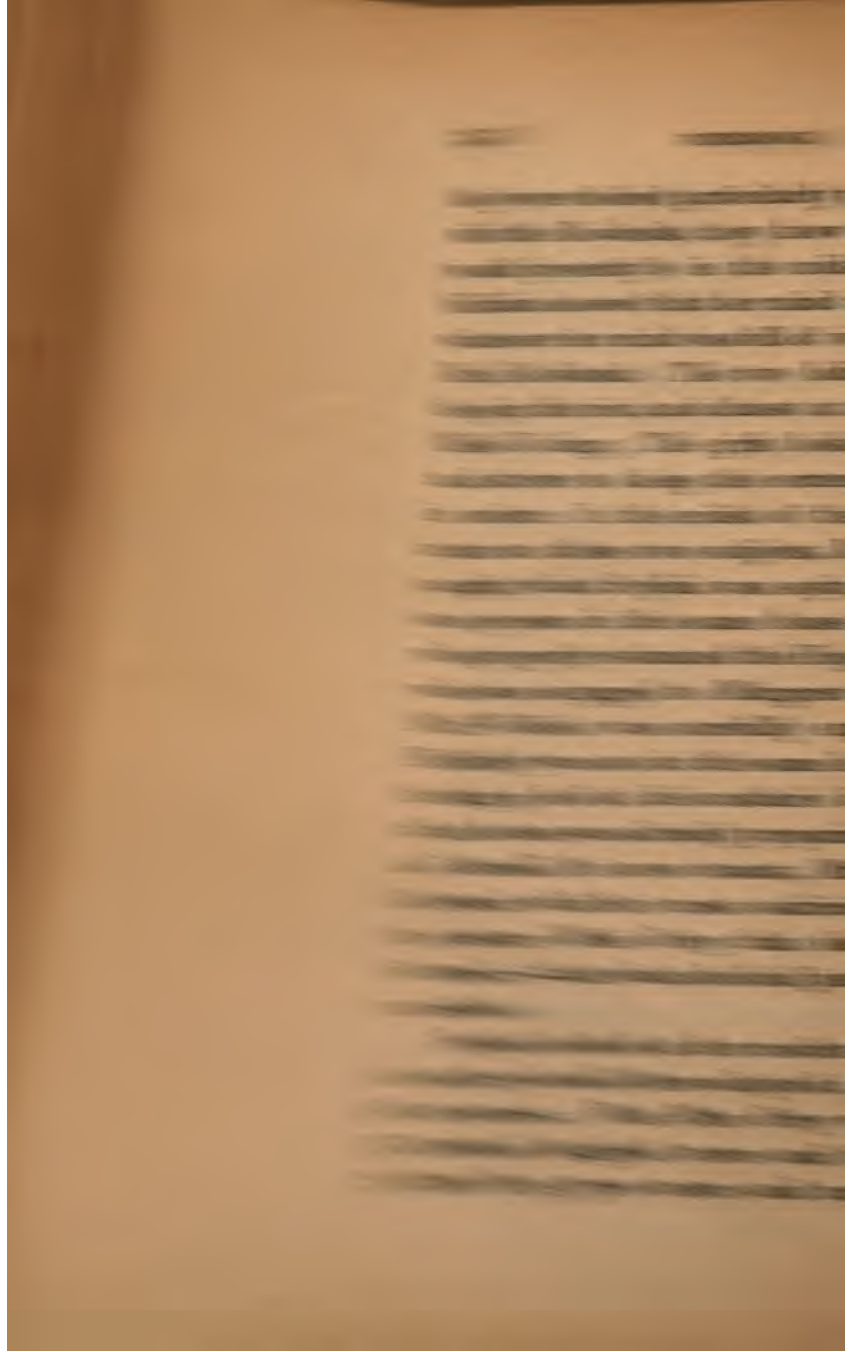
Philip was not disposed to throw any light on this part of the affair; and the gentlemen parted at the turnstile. After a few steps, Philip heard himself called. Mr. Grey was hastening after him, to know whether this matter was to be spoken of or to remain quiet, after Mrs. Grey had been informed. He had perfectly understood that all Deerbrook was soon to know it; but it was a different question whether his family were to be

authorised to tell it. Mr. Enderby desired they would follow their own inclinations entirely. Margaret's only wish was, that her kind relations should be informed directly from herself, before anybody else but her friend, Miss Young: and his own only desire was, that, on Margaret's account, every one should understand that his engagement was to her, and not to any lady at Rome or elsewhere. Virtual provision having thus been made for the enlightenment of all Deerbrook in the course of the day, the gentlemen once more went their respective ways.

In her present mood of amiability, Mrs. Rowland determined on giving the Greys the pleasure of a call from Mr. Walcot. In the afternoon, when Fanny was saying her catechism to her mama, and Mary was repeating a hymn to Sophia, Mrs. Rowland's well-known knock was heard, and any religious feelings which might have been aroused in the minds of the little girls were put to flight by the sound. Sophia turned her feet off the sofa where she had been lying all day, that Mrs. Rowland might not suspect that she had suffered from the mobbing of the Hopes. The children were enjoined not to refer to it, and were recommended to avoid the subject of Miss Young also, if possible.

The amazement and wrath of the party at hearing Mr. Walcot announced was beyond expression.

Mrs. Grey was sufficiently afraid of her neighbour to confine herself to negative rudeness. She did the most she dared in not looking at Mr. Walcot, or asking him to sit down. He did not appear to miss her attentions, but seated himself beside her daughter, and offered remarks on the difference between Deerbrook and Cheltenham. Sophia made no intelligible replies, and looked impenetrably reserved; he therefore tried another subject, enlarged upon Mrs. Rowland's extreme kindness to him, and said that his parents wrote that they considered him a fortunate youth in having met with a friend who would be a mother or sister to him, now that he was no longer under the parental wing. Sophia had intended to be quite distant and silent; but his long-winded praises of all the Rowlands were too much for her. She observed that it was generally considered that there was nobody in Deerbrook to compare with the family in the corner-house,—the Hopes and Miss Ibbotson. From this moment, the *tête-à-tête* became animated; the speakers alternated rapidly and regularly: for every virtue in a Rowland there was a noble quality in a Hope: for every accomplishment in Matilda and Anna, there was a grace in "our dear Mr. Hope" or "our sweet Hester." Fanny and Mary listened with some amusement to what they heard on either side of their pair of low stools. As sure as



last sent the little girls to see whether their father was at home, that he might bear his testimony. He came; and in reply to his astonishment about what she could mean, Mrs. Rowland said that she did not deny that there was some present entanglement; but that she warned Margaret's connexions not to suppose that her brother would ever be married to Miss Ibbotson. Mr. Grey observed that time would show, and inquired after Mrs. Enderby. The report of her was very flattering indeed. She was to be quite well now soon. Mr. Walcot's opinion of her case was precisely what Mrs. Rowland had always held. Mrs. Enderby's complaints were nervous,—nervous altogether. With retirement from common acquaintances, and the society of the dear children, and the attendance of a servant (most highly recommended) who would not humour her fancies as Phœbe had done; and, above all, with a medical attendant under the same roof for the present, she was to be quite well immediately. Mr. Walcot's countenance wore an expression of perfect delight at the prospect, and Mr. Grey's of the blackest displeasure.

When the visitors were gone, Mr. Walcot being allowed to find his way out as he could, the little girls heard them discussed in the way which might be expected, and were then desired to finish their catechism and hymn. Mama and Sophia were still flushed and agitated with what they had been

hearing and saying, when the low, serious voices of Fanny and Mary recited,—the one an abjuration of all envy, malice, hatred, and uncharitableness, and the other—

"Teach me to feel for others' woe,
To hide the faults I see;
The mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

"You have a warning, my dear," said Mrs. Grey to Fanny, "in the lady who was here just now,—a terrible warning against malice and all those faults. You see how unhappy she makes every one about her, by her having indulged her temper to such a degree. You see——"

"Mary, my darling," said Mr. Grey, "repeat that hymn to me again—

'Teach me to feel for others' woe,
To hide the faults I see.'

Let us have that hymn over again, my dear child."

CHAPTER XVI.

GOING TO REST.

Mr. Walcot had arrived nearly at the end of his letter to his parents, when summoned to attend Mrs. Rowland to call on the Greys. He was afterwards glad that he had left room to put in that perhaps what Mr. Enderby had said about Deerbrook ought to be the less regarded, from its having come out that he was in an entanglement with the sister-in-law of this Mr. Hope, when he had rather have been engaged to another person, —being actually, indeed, attached to a lady now abroad. He represented that Mrs. Rowland evidently paid very little regard to her brother's views of Deerbrook affairs, now that his mind was in a state of distraction between his proper attachment and his new entanglement. So Mr. Enderby's opinion ought not to go for more than it was worth.

The letter was still not quite finished when he was called to Mrs. Enderby. She was very ill, and Mr. Rowland and Phœbe were alarmed.

Philip was at the corner-house. Mrs. Rowland was gone to see Miss Young, to convince her that she must put herself into Mr. Walcot's hands immediately,—to declare, indeed, that she should send her own medical man to attend her dear children's governess. The argument occupied some time, and Mrs. Rowland's absence was protracted. Mrs. Enderby had been extremely terrified, the evening before, at the noises she had heard, and the light of the bonfire upon the sky. The children were permitted to carry to her all the extravagant reports that were afloat about Mr. Hope being roasted in the fire, the ladies being in the hands of the mob, and so forth; and though her son-in-law had seen her before she settled for the night, and had assured her that everybody was safe, she could not be tranquillised. She thought he was deceiving her for her good, and that the children were probably nearest the truth. She was unable to close her eyes, and in the middle of the night told Phœbe that she could not be satisfied—she should not have a moment's peace, till she had seen some one of the dear people from the corner-house, to know from themselves that they were quite safe. Phœbe had found it difficult to persuade her that it was now two o'clock in the morning, and that they were all, no doubt, asleep in their beds. She passed a wretched night; and the next day, after

Philip had succeeded in composing her, a strange gentleman was brought to her to prescribe for her. This revived her terrors. She said she would ask no more questions, for all were in league to deceive her. Then she cried because she had said so harsh a thing, and begged that Phœbe would not expose it. Her weeping continued till Phœbe's heart was almost broken. The infallible drops failed; arrow-root was in vain; the children were sent away as soon as they came in, as it would hurt their spirits, their mother thought, to see distress of this kind. In the afternoon, quiet was prescribed by the authorities, and the old lady was left alone with Phœbe. To the weeping succeeded the spasms, so violent that little George was despatched with all speed to summon his uncle, and Mr. Walcot was called away from crossing the ends of his letter. No one but he proposed sending for Mrs. Rowland; and his hint to that effect was not taken.

Philip arrived in a shorter time than could have been supposed possible. Mr. Rowland then immediately disappeared. He had formed the heroic resolution of bringing Margaret into the house on his own responsibility, for Mrs. Enderby's relief and gratification; and he was gone to tell Margaret that he considered her now as Mrs. Enderby's daughter, and was come to summon her to the sick bed. Philip presently discovered that the presence of some one from

the Hopes, would be the best cordial that could be administered; and he set forth on the same errand —to bring Margaret, that she might have his protection in case of his sister returning before her arrival. Mrs. Rowland did return; and the two gentlemen, having taken different roads to the corner-house, (it being a matter of old dispute which was the shortest,) missed each other. Margaret was gone with Mr. Rowland before Philip arrived.

"Here I will leave you," said Mr. Rowland to Margaret, on the steps of his own house. "You will find Philip and Phœbe up-stairs, and Mr. Walcot. I must go in search of Mr. Hope, and beg the favour of him to tell me whether we are proceeding rightly with our patient. She is too ill for ceremony."

Margaret wondered why, if this was the case, Mr. Rowland did not bring Edward to the patient at once; but she had her wonder to herself, for her escort was gone. The servant did not more than half open the door, and seemed unwilling to let Margaret enter; but she passed in, saying that she must see Phœbe for a moment. She soon found that she was to be left standing on the mat; for no person appeared, though she thought she heard whispers up-stairs. Ned coming to peep from the study-door, she beckoned him to her, and asked to be shown to where Phœbe was.

The child took her hand, and led her up-stairs. At the top of the first flight she met the lady of the house, who asked her, with an air of astonishment, what she wanted there? Margaret replied that Mr. Rowland had brought her to see Mrs. Enderby. That was impossible, the lady replied. Mr. Rowland knew that Mrs. Enderby was too ill to receive visitors. She herself would send for Miss Ibbotson whenever it should be proper for Mrs. Enderby to admit strangers. Margaret replied that she must see Phœbe—that she should not retire till she had spoken to her, or till Mr. Rowland's return. Mrs. Rowland sent Ned to desire the servant to open the door for Miss Ibbotson; and Margaret took her seat on a chair on the landing, saying that, relying on her title to be admitted to Mrs. Enderby, at the desire of her old friend herself, and of all the family but Mrs. Rowland, she should wait till she could obtain admittance.

How rejoiced was she, at this moment, to hear the house-door open, to hear the step she knew so well, to see Philip, and to have her arm drawn within his!

"Let us pass," said he to his sister, who stopped the way.

"Rest a moment," said Margaret. "Recover your breath a little, or we shall flurry her."

"She is flurried to death already," said Philip,

in his deepest tone of emotion. "Priscilla, our mother is dying;—it is my belief that she is dying. If you have any humanity,—if you have any regard for your own future peace of mind, conduct yourself decently now. Govern your own family as you will, when you have lost your mother; but hold off your hand from her last hours."

"Your own last hours are to come," said Margaret. "As you would have Matilda be to you then, be you to your mother now."

"I must ascertain one thing, Philip," said Mrs. Rowland. "Does my mother know of what you call your engagement to Miss Ibbotson?"

"She does not; and the sole reason is, that I would not subject her to what you might say and do. I wished, for her own sake, to keep the whole affair out of her thoughts, when once I had removed the false impressions you had given her. But Margaret and I may see fit to tell her now. I may see fit to give her the comfort of a daughter who will be to her what you ought to have been."

He gently drew his sister aside, to make way for Margaret to pass.

"In my own house!" exclaimed Mrs. Rowland, in a tone of subdued rage.

"We should have been in the house over the way," replied her brother: "and we act as if we were there. Come, my Margaret, we are doing right."

"We are," replied Margaret; but yet she trembled.

"I must go in first, and tell her that I have brought you," said Philip. "And yet I do not like to leave you, even for a moment."

"O, never mind! I am not to be shaken now."

Mrs. Rowland did not appear during the two long minutes that Margaret was left by herself in the dressing-room. When Philip came for her, he said,

"You must not leave her again. You will stay, will not you? You shall be protected: but you must stay. I shall tell her how we stand to each other,—we will tell her,—carefully, for she cannot bear much emotion.—You are tired,—you must be tired," he continued, looking at her with anxiety; "but———"

"Do not speak of it. I did sleep last night, and there will be time enough for sleep when duty is done,—the duty for which I have longed ever since I knew what duty was." And her eyes swam in tears.

Phœbe's face was a dismal sight,—too dismal for the sick-room, for so many hours had she been in tears. She was dismissed to refresh herself with a turn in the garden. It was Philip's doing that she was at hand at all. Mrs. Rowland had ordained that she should go; but Philip had supported the girl in her resolution to bear anything,

rather than leave her mistress while it was essential to her mistress's comfort that she should stay.

Mrs. Enderby was in great pain; but yet not suffering too much to be comforted by finding that all were safe and well in the corner-house. She even smiled when the others laughed at the ridiculous stories with which the children had assaulted her imagination. She thought it was very wrong for people to fabricate such things, and tell them to children:—they might chance to put some extremely old babies into a terrible fright.—She was soothed in the very midst of a spasm, by hearing that Margaret would stay with her as long as she liked, if it would be of any comfort to her. In answer to her surprise, and almost alarm at such a blessing, Philip said that Margaret wished it as a pleasure, and asked it as a sort of right. Now, could she not guess any reason why it was a sort of right of Margaret's to attend upon her like a daughter? Yes,—it was so indeed! Margaret was to be her daughter—some time or other,—when her big boy should have learned all his lessons, as little George would say.

"I am thankful! Indeed I *am* thankful, my dears, to hear this. But, my loves, that will be too late for me. I rejoice indeed; but it will be too late for me."

"Well, then, let me be your daughter now."

The old lady clasped her arms about Margaret, and endured her next paroxysm with her head upon her young friend's shoulder.

"I have a daughter already," said she, when she revived a little: "but I have room in my heart for another: and I always had you in my heart, my love, from the first moment I saw you."

"You hold all the world in your heart, I think."

"Ah! my love, you flatter me. I mean I took to you particularly from the very hour I saw you. You have always been so kind and gentle with me!"

Margaret's heart swelled at the thought that any one could ever have been otherwise than kind and gentle to one so lowly and so loving.

Nothing more could be done than was done for the sufferer. Hope saw her, at Mr. Rowland's desire, and said this. He left directions with Margaret, and then declined staying where his presence could be of no use, and caused much annoyance. Mrs. Enderby was sinking rapidly. The probability was, that a few hours would end the struggle. Mrs. Rowland was much alarmed and shocked. She went and came between the drawing-room and her mother's chamber, but talked of the claims of her children at such a time, and persuaded herself that her duty lay chiefly with them. Others wanted no persuasion about

the matter. They were too glad to have her dispose herself where she would be out of her mother's way. Mrs. Enderby looked round now and then, and seemed as if on the point of asking for her, but that her courage failed. At last, about eight in the evening, when Mrs. Rowland had come in softly, and Phœbe had met her at the door, to say something very unceremonious, Mrs. Enderby's voice was heard.

"Phœbe, I hope you are not preventing any person from coming in. I should wish to see my daughter. Priscilla, my dear, let me see you. Come to me, my dear."

Mrs. Rowland's face was very pale, and her brow told of a dreadful head-ache. There was a dark expression in her countenance, but the traces of irritability were gone. She was subdued for the hour.

"My dear daughter," said Mrs. Enderby, "I may not be able at another time to thank you as I should like, for all the care you have taken of me:—nor can I now do it as I could wish: but I thank you, my love."

Mrs. Rowland involuntarily cast a glance at her brother and Margaret, to see how they took this: but their eyes were fixed on her mother.

"And I can only say," continued Mrs. Enderby, "that I am aware that you must have had many

things to bear from me. I must have been much in your way, and often . . . ."

Margaret and Philip implored her to say nothing of this kind; they could not bear it from one who was all patience herself, and gave no cause for forbearance in others. Mrs. Rowland did not speak —perhaps because she could not.

"Well, well; I will not dwell upon these things. You are all very kind. I only wanted to say that I was sensible of . . . . of many things.—Priscilla . . . . "

"Mother!" said she, starting.

"This dear young friend of ours,—she calls herself my daughter, bless her!—is to be your sister, my love. Philip has been telling me . . . . Let me see . . . . Give me the pleasure of seeing . . . ."

Margaret could have opened her arms to any spectre from the pale kingdoms at a moment like this, and under the imploring eye of Mrs. Enderby. She disengaged her hand from that of her old friend, and took Mrs. Rowland's, offering to kiss her cheek. Mrs. Rowland returned the kiss, with some little visible agitation.

"Thank you, my dears!" said Mrs. Enderby, in a strong voice of satisfaction. She had made a great effort. Her speech now failed her; but they thought she would have said something about the children.

"The children . . . . ." said Mrs. Rowland, rather eagerly. She turned, and went slowly out of the room. The moment the door was shut, there was a heavy fall. She had fainted on the outside.

Her mother heard it not. When Mrs. Rowland was found to be reviving, the children were brought to their grandmama's room. They quietly visited the bed, one by one, and with solemnity kissed the wasted cheek,—the first time they had ever kissed grandmama without return. The baby made its remark upon this in its own way. As it had often done before, it patted the cheek rather roughly: several hands were instantly stretched out to stop its play; it set up a cry, and was hurried out of the room.

By the middle of the night, Margaret was longing to be at home and alone. It was all over. She was ashamed to think of her own share of the loss while witnessing Philip's manly grief, or even while seeing how Phœbe lamented, and how Mr. Rowland himself was broken down; but not the less for this was her heart repeating, till it was sick of itself, "I have lost another mother."

She did not see Mrs. Rowland again.

In the earliest grey of the morning, Mr. Rowland took Margaret home. As they stood on the steps, waiting to be let in, she observed that the

morning star was yellow and bright in the sky. As soon as the sun had risen, the toll of the church bell conveyed to every ear in Deerbrook the news that Mrs. Enderby was dead. Perhaps there might have been compunction in the breasts of some who had been abroad on Saturday night, on hearing the universal remark that it must have been rather sudden at last.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

3 2044 014 347 611